The Betrothed

(I Promessi Sposi)

A Milanese Story of the 17th Century

ALESSANDRO MANZONI

Translated by

DANIEL J. CONNOR

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A MILANESE STORY
OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
NEW YORK · BOSTON · CHICAGO · DALLAS
ATLANTA · SAN FRANCISCO

MACMILLAN & CO., LIMITED
LONDON · BOMBAY · CALCUTTA
MELBOURNE

THE MACMILLAN CO. OF CANADA, LTD.
TORONTO

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BY
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New York
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1924

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Set up and electrotyped.
Published May, 1924.

Printed in the United States of America by
THE FERRIS PRINTING COMPANY, NEW YORK.

TO THE MEMORY
OF THE
RIGHT REV. EUGENE AUGUSTINE GARVEY
A SINCERE ADMIRER OF MANZONI
AND
A CHURCHMAN WHOM MANZONI WOULD HAVE ADMIRED
THIS VERSION OF
HIS FAVORITE HISTORICAL ROMANCE
IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

The Translator

PREFACE

It is difficult for the reader of today, who sees Papini's "Life of Christ" occupying the place of best seller on American bookstalls, to realize that, a century ago, Italian prose was the pariah of Europe. Political and social disintegration, by depriving Italy's representative citizens of the natural opportunities for vigorous interchange of thought, had also enervated the written language and separated it by a wide chasm from the spoken language on which it depends for its energy and expressiveness. Jeffrey's verdict, pronounced in 1810,[1] that "almost all Italian prose is feeble and deficient in expression," is recognized on both sides of the Alps as nothing more than an adequate expression of the actual state of affairs. Just as far beyond controversy is it that the immense change which the intervening century has witnessed was brought about by Manzoni, and specifically by his masterpiece "I Promessi Sposi," or "The Betrothed." "The Italian book," candidly admits d'Ovidio, "had become almost unknown to the intellectual commerce of Europe, and Manzoni brought it back in triumph and gave it a place—and such a place!—in what we call world-literature by his immortal work, the most interesting after the 'Divina Commedia' and 'Orlando Furioso,' the loftiest after the 'Commedia,' the most printed book in Italy and the most translated into the various tongues of Europe."[2]

Alessandro Manzoni, though the head of the Romantic school in Italy, led one of the most unromantic of lives. All of his eighty-eight years, except the few that intervened between college and his marriage at twenty-three, were spent in an almost monastic retirement. His life presents very few sentimental vicissitudes and those closely guarded, no professional vicissi-

[1] Life and Writings of Victor Alfieri, Edinburgh Review, January, 1810.
[2] d'Ovidio, Nuovi Studi Manzoniani, Hoepli, Milan, 1908, p. 6.

tudes, no political vicissitudes, and only unimportant financial vicissitudes. Added to this dearth of materials the biographer finds another difficulty in his subject's unconquerable reticence and modesty. Even in correspondence with his closest friends he shrank from those more personal touches by which other men betray their likes and dislikes, their joys and sorrows, as from a display of egotism. He was a prey to the tortures of neurasthenia from youth up, and still he confines his references to his sufferings to occasions when it became necessary to excuse his tardiness. It is hardly matter for surprise, therefore, that no extensive biography of him has yet been written.

Manzoni was born in Milan on March 7, 1785, of Don Pietro Manzoni, a noble landowner of Valsassina, and Giulia Becaria, daughter of the celebrated penologist, who had revolutionized the ancient prison system almost single-handed. The union was a singularly unhappy one, and it was, very likely, to remove Lissandrino from an unpleasant domestic atmosphere that he was sent to boarding-school at Merate at the age of six. Though of a nature demanding more than the ordinary child's share of affection and sympathy, he passed the next ten years in three successive institutions. That he was left temporarily with a strain of cynicism is not surprising. The wonder is, rather, that he escaped the penalty of lifelong misanthropy that so often follows in the wake of an experience like this in childhood.

A few years after leaving college he accompanied his mother, who in the meantime had been legally separated from her husband and contracted an irregular union with Count Carlo Imbonati, to Paris. This was in 1805. To the era of the Encyclopedists had succeeded that of the Ideologists, who carried on the Voltairean traditions and furnished France with thinkers like Cabanis, Constant, deTracy and Fauriel, and brilliant salons like those of Madame Condorcet and Madame Cabanis. Manzoni was a frequenter of both, but especially of the former, where he laid the foundations of his historic friendship with Fauriel, who was to become his poetic monitor, critic and translator. The effects of his environment can be most succinctly conveyed by a short quotation from a letter written in 1806 in reply to the

announcement of a friend's death. "You cannot believe how afflicted I was at the news of poor Arese's grave illness. I am bitterly grieved that his friends did not have access to him, but that, instead, he had to be confronted with the horrible apparition of a priest."[3]

He returned to the Catholic faith in consequence of his wife's conversion from Calvinism during their residence in Paris in 1810. From that time on religion not only moulded his character and conduct, but dominated his thought and imagination, and even determined his mature poetic criterions. "Manzoni the poet and critic acquired his characteristic traits only after his conversion, and much more under this influence than under that of contemporary literary currents."[4] "It is a fact," he writes in 1828, "that the evident truth of Catholicity pervades and dominates my mind. I see it at the beginning and end of every moral question. I note its influence where it is recognized and invoked as well as where it is ignored. Even such truths as are discovered without its guidance seem to me incomplete and insecure until they are included in its teaching and they appear as the consequences of its doctrine—which they are."[5] What gave a distinctive character to Manzoni's religion is that it proved to be no uncongenial element for the ironical laughter he inherited from his unregenerate years. He was the perfect synthesis of Voltaire and St. Thomas Aquinas, or, as Carlo Cattaneo observes, he harmonized two qualities that generally exclude each other—piety and satire.

Manzoni's period of serious poetic activity began two years later, in 1812. His "Hymn on the Resurrection" was the first of a series of sacred and profane lyrics culminating in his "Ode on the Death of Napoleon" in 1821, whose new accent penetrated as far as Weimar and certified to Goethe the birth of a genius whom he acclaimed from the first. In later life Manzoni came to the conclusion that his poetic vocation had not been real—

[3] Carteggio di Alessandro Manzoni, Hoepli, Milan, 1912, vol. I, p. 59.

[4] A. Momigliano, Vita di Alessandro Manzoni, Principato, Messina, 1915, p. 34.

[5] Carteggio, vol. II, p. 387.

that "the muse had not come in search of him, but that he had only been winding himself in pursuing her."[6] This much is true, that his predetermined standards were very definite, so that, in lyric and dramatic poetry as well as in the case of historical romance, his productions can be considered as perfect paradigms of the principles he espoused. In lyric poetry his aim was naturalness and sincerity. He thus broke decisively with the excessive formalism of the preceding epoch. "By perusing the poetry of more than two centuries," he notes, "one sees it dominated by a preponderating esteem of poetry itself and a contempt of almost everything else, except only living potentates. Addressing the Fates, raising indestructible monuments, defying the all-corroding tooth of Time, joking about death—these are its ordinary themes."[7]

The banishment of pagan mythology from modern poetry was only one of the reforms undertaken by the Italian Romanticists. The opposition they encountered from the Classicists on this point was but a little less strenuous than on the subject of the dramatic unities. Manzoni not only wrote the palmary indictment of this tyrannical tradition in his "Letter to Chauvet," but he composed, besides, two dramas, "Il Conte di Carmagnola" in 1820 and "Adelchi" in 1822, in which he set the unities of time and place aside definitely, and introduced, at the same time, several choruses in a distinctly lyric form. Though abounding in dramatic situations, these pieces were composed only for reading, and it was against his advice that they were produced in 1828. They have not occupied the stage themselves, but they have the merit of having blazed the way for other playwrights and of having emancipated them from the necessity of "making their characters speak as men do not and could not speak in ordinary life, of eschewing both poetry and prose and substituting for them a chill rhetoric most unsuited to producing a sympathetic response."[8] In this sense he can be considered the father of the modern school of Italian dramatists.

[6] G. Sforza, Epistolario di A. Manzoni, Carrara, Milan, vol. II, p. 283.
[7] Opere Inedite e Rare, vol. III, p. 168.
[8] Carteggio, vol. I, p. 365.

While still engaged on the revision of "Adelchi," in 1821, Manzoni was contemplating what he considered a still better means of illustrating his conviction that history supplies one of the richest sources of inspiration to the literary artist. He sketches his idea of what the historical novel should be to Fauriel in a letter of November 3, 1821. "I conceive it to be the representation of a given state of society by means of events and characters so closely resembling the reality that one might take it for some authentic history that had just been discovered. When historical facts and personages are brought in, I think they should be represented in the most strictly historical way. Thus Richard Cœur-de-Lion, for example, to me appears defective in Ivanhoe."[9] By May, 1822, he had his canvas pretty well filled in. These are the elements with which he is to deal: "The most arbitrary kind of government, combined with feudal and popular anarchy; legislation that astonishes us by its prescriptions as well as by what it presupposes or recites; an ignorance that is profound, ferocious and arrogant; some anecdotes that are little known, but contained in documents deserving of trust, and that furnish full opportunity for developing these details; finally, a plague that gives exercise to the most consummate and shameless depravity, the most absurd prejudices and the most touching virtues."[10]

One of the technical canons which he formulates in 1822 surprises us by its modernity. "As for the march of events and the intrigue, I think that the best way of avoiding what others have done is to set one's self to studying how men act in reality, and to study the points where this contradicts the spirit of romance. In all the romances I have read I seem to detect great efforts to establish interesting and unexpected relations among the different characters in order to bring them on the stage in company, to invent episodes that affect simultaneously and in manifold directions the destiny of all—in a word, an artificial unity that we do not see in real life. I know that it passes for a merit in certain works which possess merits of a real and high

[9] Carteggio, vol. I, p. 541.
[10] Id., vol. II, p. 26.

order; but I am convinced that some day it will be an object of criticism."[11]

"I Promessi Sposi" came out finally in June, 1827. Its success was immediate. "It is one of the four or five books that have given me the most rapturous reading of my life," wrote Lamartine.[12] "Walter Scott is great," commented Chateaubriand, "but Manzoni is something more."[13] Goethe was reading it a month after it was off the press. "Manzoni's novel," Eckermann reports him as saying, "soars far above all that we know of the kind. I need say to you nothing more than that the interior life—all that comes from the soul of the poet—is absolutely perfect; and that the outward—the delineation of localities and the like—is in no way inferior."[14] During his last Italian tour Lord Macaulay, according to his usual plan of reading the literature of the countries through which he was passing, devoured Manzoni's three volumes with characteristic avidity. "I have finished Manzoni's novel, not without many tears," he writes in his diary. "The scene between the Archbishop and Don Abbondio is one of the noblest I know. The parting scene between the lovers and Father Cristoforo is most touching. If the Church of Rome really were what Manzoni represents her to be, I should be tempted to follow Newman's example."[15]

It was Giordani, writing in September, 1827, who pointed out the appeal that was destined to make the new production immortal, however. "As a literary work, there might be some controversy, according to the variety of tastes and habits of thought. But, as a book of the people, a catechism dramatized, it seems to me stupendous—divine."[16] It is the people who have, in fact, proved by a century of ever-increasing admiration for this tale of a peasant lad and lass that it has the qualities which elevate it above the plane of transient literature, no matter

[11] Id., vol. II, pp. 27–28.

[12] Carteggio, vol. II, p. 352.

[13] L. Beltrami, Alessandro Manzoni, Hoepli, Milan, 1898, p. 95.

[14] Goethe's Conversations, George Bell and Sons, London, 1906, p. 270.

[15] Trevelyan, Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay, Lovell, New York, vol. II, p. 265.

[16] Sforza, Epistolario di A. Manzoni, Carrara, Milan, vol. I, p. 374.

how excellent, to the category of the permanent and classical. "It is not enough that the intellectual moment of a long period be presented; enduring literature must do much more than that. It must depict the personality of the people, which the people themselves recognize as the ideal personality of an epoch."[17]

It seems strange that a hermit like Manzoni should have been the standard-bearer of a revolution; but so it was. Carducci would exclude him from the band of patriots who brought about their country's independence of Austria. But, though he did not bear a sword nor, like Berchet, sound the immediate call to arms, he did something more essential to ultimate victory in keeping alive, after the discouragements of 1814 and 1821, the spirit of determination. A period of literary renascence has more than once in history accompanied or preceded a political revolution. So it did in Italy. It was, in reality, patriotism that furnished the driving force behind the Romanticist movement and the short career of the "Conciliatore," which was the official organ of the movement. Banished from political life, Italians of the early nineteenth century took refuge in literature, thereby initiating that long and painful struggle against foreign domination which at last unified the nation. "In combating the old standards of Classicism in the interests of Romanticism," Mazzini confessed in his later life, "we were fighting, in the only way open to us, in the cause of the revolution."[18]

Some censured Austria openly, and were beheaded or thrown to rot in the Spielburg prison. Manzoni's satire was so subtle and deadly that the enemy were as helpless in counteracting its effects as if it had been some poisonous gas of modern warfare. "For us Lombardesi," writes Sailer, "that apparatus of historical sketches on Spain's government of the Duchy of Milan was a skilful expedient for smuggling under the eyes of the masters a travesty on Austrian officialdom. Berchet, Guerazzi and Mazzini worked powerfully on the young. Manzoni, without seeming to have aught to do with it, demolished foreign domination in the minds of a multitude to whom the writings of these

[17] Georg Brandes, in Moritzen's "Georg Brandes in Life and Letters."
[18] d'Ovidio, Nuovi Studi Manzoniani, p. 320.

outlaws were inaccessible and prepared it to endorse the political movement when it came along."[19]

Not that "I Promessi Sposi" belongs to the literature of propaganda. It simply develops moral and psychological principles that are eternal. The occasion which calls forth such masterpieces may pass, but their applicability remains unimpaired by new political and intellectual environments. "Manzoni's art is the reflection of the highest ideals that the human conscience entertains or should entertain. Religion is its inspiration, because that, too, is rooted in the human conscience. His art, like all true art, is instinct with the real, substantial, perennial life of man himself, not a life that is artificial, capricious, arbitrary, changeable. He sought to create an Italian unity in the language of literature before this unity appeared, as he had wished and foretold that it would appear, in the realm of history and politics. And he sought to create it because only in this way could art, which, according to him, should be the voice and ally of the human conscience, find easy access to the national conscience. A hundred years may have passed by, but the man still lives. He lives, and remains essentially the most educative writer of Italy."[20]

DANIEL J. CONNOR.

November 4, 1923.

[19] d'Ovidio, Discussioni Manzoniane, Lapi, Città di Castello, 1886, pp. 139–140.

[20] Ruggero Bonghi, Horae Subcesivæ, p. 388.

AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION[1]

"HISTORIE may be truelie defyned as a glorious Warre against Tyme, inasmuch as it rescueth ye Yeres he had taken captiue, and, quickening euen their dede Corses, passeth them againe in reuiewe and deployeth them in battaille Arraye. But ye illustrious Champiouns who garner up all the Palmes and Laurels in this Arena seize onelie ye most showie and brilliant Spoyles, embawming in inke the mightie Achieuements of Princes and Potentates and high Nobilitie and intertwining with ye shaurp Nedle of their Minde the thredes of Golde and Silke wich forme an endless Embroyderie of Splendide Dedes.

To wich great Arguments and perylous Hightes my feblesse durst not aspire, or to moue about amid ye Labyrinthes of polytical Intrigue and ye brazen Clangours of Warre. Onelie, hauing lerned of certaine memorable euents, albeit they happened to mechanical folk and Personnes of lowe degree, I haue undertaken to preserue ye memorie of them to Posteritie by composing an authentick and playne Accoumpte, or Relacion, of the whole. In wich wil be seen, for all that ye stage is narrow, tragick and most horrible Calamities and scenes of stupendous Atrocitie, with Interludes of vertuous Emprise and angelick Godenesse set ouer againste truelie diabolick Machinacions. And uerilie, forasmuch

[1] [American and English readers will at once be struck by the similarity between this Introduction and Scott's favorite expedient of feigning, in the Waverley Novels, to edit a manuscript submitted to him by some Captain Clutterbuck or Jedediah Cleishbotham. It was from Scott, in fact, that Manzoni derived not only this suggestion but the general form of his romance. But it would be a mistake to suppose that the imitation of form is mechanical or purposeless. This fiction of the anonymous *secentista*, besides serving to adumbrate Manzoni's justification for liberties with the language that were then in the nature of innovations, though they have since been accepted as the basis of modern Italian prose, affords him frequent occasions in the course of the work for displaying that delightful humor which is one of the most charming characteristics of his style.—*Translator.*]

as this Realme is under the mightie proteccion of His Catholick Majestie, Our Souereigne Lord, that Sonne wich neuer setteth, and aboue it shines with borrowed light that Moone with neuer waneth, ye Kinges owne Vicegerent *pro tempore* of heroick lineage, and those Starres fixed in ye Firmamaunte, wich are ye ryght noble Senators, and those other worshipful Magistrautes wich represente ye wandering Planets scattering their light in euery direccion,—thus forminge a whole glorious Spheare,—other cause can there be none for this our seeinge such a Heauen transformed into a Hel of dark Dedes, Wickednesse and Crueltie, wich rash men cease not to perpetrate, than diabolick Arts and Agencies, seeing that human Malice of itself should not auail to wythstande so many Heroes, who cease not, with Argus' eyes and Briarius' armes, to travail for the publick Weale.

For wich cause, in inditing this Narrative of euents that befel no farther back then the springtyde of my owne lyfe, albeit the most part of ye Characters who plays a role therein be now uanished from the Stage of this Worlde, hauing passed under the dominioun of ye Parcae, still weighty consideracions haue moued me to wythholde their Names, to wit their Patronymicks, and to do in like wise with localities, mentioning only the Regions *generaliter*. And let this be not accoumpted an imperfection in the Narratiue, thus deformynge ye offsprynge of my rude Pen, unlesse such Critick be a uery straunger to all Philosophie. As for its Discyples, they wil easilie perceiue that ye substance of ye Relacion suffereth no lack therebye. Wherefore, inasmuch as nothing is more euidente or undisputed than this, that Names be onelie Accidents *puri purissimi* . . . . ."

"But after I have had the heroic patience to transcribe the story contained in this manuscript, with its scratchings and its half effaced text, and brought it, as we say, to light, will any be found with patience enough to read it?"

This misgiving, having arisen in the throes of deciphering a blot that occurred immediately after this *puri purissimi*, caused me to suspend my copying and give serious thought to what had best be done. "It is true," I said to myself, as I idly skimmed over the pages, "that this fusillade of metaphors and petty con-

ceits does not go on so continuously through the whole work. The good *secentista* wished to exhibit his virtuosity at the start; but then, in the course of the narrative and sometimes for long stretches, the style keeps a much evener and more natural gait. Very true. Still how commonplace, how stiff, how ungrammatical it is! Lombard idioms without end, orthodox expressions used mistakenly, arbitrary syntax, disjointed sentences! Then the way he sprinkles his text with elegant phrases from the Spanish, and, worst of all, his inexorable perversity in lugging in that awful rhetoric of the Introduction in the most sublime and the most pathetic passages of the story, whenever an opportunity offers to excite wonder or induce reflection—those passages, in a word, which call for a little rhetoric, to be sure, but used temperately, with nicety and good taste. Again, uniting the most contrary qualities with an ability that is marvelous, he succeeds in being at once uncouth and affected within the limits of the same page, the same sentence, the same word. In short, he is infected with the characteristic vice of the writers of his age and country—declamatory bombast, composed of vulgar solecisms and pervaded with outlandish pedantry. On sober reflection, it is, indeed, not a thing to place before readers of today—they are too sophisticated, too surfeited already with this sort of extravagance in composition. It was well, after all, that the happy thought came to me at the very outset. And so I wash my hands of the ill-omened task."

But in the very act of shutting up the rubbish in its covers again I was smitten with regret that so beautiful a story should remain forever unknown; because, as a story, it may strike the reader differently, but to me it appeared, as I say, beautiful—very beautiful. "Why," I thought, "could not I take the series of events as they are given in the manuscript and make the language over?" No reasonable objection occurring to me, this course was forthwith adopted. There you have the origin of the present book, stated with a frankness equal to the importance of the book itself.

But some of those events, as well as certain customs described by our author, to us seemed so extraordinary and odd, to call

them by no worse name, that, before crediting them, we thought it well to consult other witnesses. So we set to rummaging through the records of the period, to see if things really went after such a fashion. The investigation dissipated all our doubts. At every step we came across similar happenings, and worse; and, what appeared more conclusive still, we even discovered certain characters, of whom, never having heard of them outside of this manuscript, we were in doubt if they really existed. We shall cite some of these witnesses at need to vouch for certain matters, which, on account of their strangeness, the reader might be disposed to doubt.

But having rejected the language of our author as intolerable, what have we substituted for it? There is the point.

Whoever intrudes to improve upon another's work without being asked, exposes himself to the liability of rendering a strict account of his own, and in a certain measure contracts the obligation of doing so; and this is a rule, grounded alike in precedent and justice, from which we do not pretend to be dispensed. Nay, to conform to it whole-heartedly, we had proposed enumerating minutely the reasons for our own style of writing; and with this end in view, we never ceased, all the time we were at work, casting about in our minds for the possible and problematic objections that might be brought against our method, with the intention of refuting them all in advance. Nor would our difficulty have arisen here; because (we must avow it in the interest of truth) not one objection presented itself without suggesting a triumphant reply—one of those replies that, I do not say solve the question at issue, but change it into something else. Often even, pitting one objection against another, we left the controversy between them; or else, comparing them attentively and sounding them to the very bottom, we succeeded in discovering and proving that, though apparently contradictory, they belonged to the same class of criticisms and arose from disregarding the data and principles on which judgment should have been predicated; and, yoking them thus in pairs to their own great amazement, we would send off the two of them about their business. Never would author have proved himself right so conclusively.

But (so it is) when we had come to the point of piecing together all these objections and replies so as to bring them into some order, Heaven help us! they made a book of themselves. Seeing which, we set our good intention aside for two reasons, which must certainly commend themselves to the reader: first, that a book gotten up to justify another book—nay, the style of another book—might appear ridiculous; second, that one book at a time is enough, maybe too much.

THE BETROTHED

Chapter I

That particular arm of Lake Como, which, reaching towards the south between two uninterrupted mountain chains, finds its shore-line broken by projecting spurs into a constant succession of bays and creeks, contracts at length quite abruptly and assumes the form and flow of a river between a headland on the right and a goodly expanse of shore-land on the other side. This transition is rendered more sensible to the eye by a bridge, which at that point joins the two banks and marks the spot at which the lake ceases to be and the Adda begins—only to resume, later on, the character of a lake, when the banks recede, permitting its waters to expand and seek the tranquil depths of still other creeks and bays.

The shore, formed by the deposits of three large torrents, slopes away from the feet of two neighboring mountains, one called St. Martin's, the other, in the Lombardese dialect, the Resegone, from its serrated profile; which does, in fact, give it the appearance of a saw, so that no one, seeing it from in front, as, for instance, from the north wall of Milan, can fail to pick it out by such a mark in that long, far-flung mountain range from the other peaks of more obscure name and less striking aspect. For a good stretch the shore ascends by a gentle, steady slope, then it breaks into hillocks and glens, into level land and acclivities, according to the stratification of the two mountains and the erosion of the water. The border itself, cut into segments by the branching of the torrents, is all gravel and stones; the background is made up of fields and vineyards, studded with communes, with villas and hamlets, and interspersed here and there with groves stretching up into the mountain. Lecco, the most important of these communes and the one from which the region derives its name, lies only a short distance from the bridge

on the edge of the lake,—indeed, when this becomes swollen, partly in the lake,—a large town in our own day and in a fair way to become a city. At the period of the events we are undertaking to narrate this town, even then deserving of consideration, was, in addition, a military post and, in consequence, could boast the honor of entertaining a commandant and the advantage of possessing a permanent garrison of Spanish soldiery, who used to set an example of modest reserve to its damsels and matrons and, on occasion, lay the tokens of their affection on the smarting shoulders of some husband or father; never failing, however, as the summer approached its end, to scatter through the vineyards in order to thin out the grapes and save the peasants some of their vintage toil.

From one to another of these hamlets, and stretching from river-bottom to upland and from hill to hill, ran, and run still, roads and lanes of varying degrees of roughness and smoothness; now sunken between walls on either side, so that, upon lifting the eyes, one's regard was met only by a patch of sky and a mountain crag; now raised upon open terraces, whence the vision ranges over prospects always rich and abounding in variety, but more or less expansive as the different views borrow more or less from the vastness of the surrounding scene, and accordingly as this or that detail looms up and dominates the spectacle or fades away and disappears from sight. First one glimpse, then another, and then a long vista of the shimmering expanse of ever-changing water; on one side the lake, closed in at the farther end, or rather, lost in a labyrinthine group of mountains, then gradually broadening between other mountains that unfurl themselves one by one to the view with their image and that of the villages on the shore inverted in the wave; on the other side a short span of river, then lake, then river again, winding its sparkling way likewise among the never-failing mountains until they dwindle in the distance and lose themselves in turn on the horizon. The place from which you contemplate these varied scenes is itself a scene on which to feast the eye. The mountain you are skirting spreads out above and around you, its peaks and crags standing out clear-cut and vivid and showing some change at

almost every step, that which at first seemed a single ridge breaking up and unfolding a panorama of ridges, and what appeared recently on the slope proving to crown some eminence; the wildness of the rest of the landscape being softened and its sublimity proportionately heightened by the mild, cultivated beauty of these foothills themselves.

Along one of these lanes, leisurely trudging his way homeward from his daily walk, towards evening of November 7, 1628, came Don Abbondio, parish priest of one of the above-mentioned villages, the name of which, however, any more than the surname of the individual, does not appear in our manuscript either here or elsewhere. He was placidly reciting his office, and from time to time, between psalms, he would close his breviary, marking the place by inserting his right forefinger, then, clasping his right hand in the left behind his back, he would continue on his way with his eyes bent on the ground, his foot spurning against the wall the pebbles which littered his path. Then he would raise his eyes, and, glancing idly around, he would rest them upon that part of a mountain where the rays of the sunken sun, escaping through the opposite cliffs, painted its precipitous sides with large splotches of purple. After reopening his breviary and reading another snatch, he arrived at a bend in the lane where he was wont to raise his eyes from the book and gaze ahead; and thus did he on this day. The road ran on straight for about sixty paces beyond the turn and then forked, like the letter Y, into two byways; that on the right rising towards the mountain and leading to the church, the other going down the valley as far as a brook. The wall on this side rose no higher than the middle of the pedestrian. The inner walls of the two byways, instead of coming to an apex, were truncated by a shrine, upon which were painted long, wriggly objects which, in the intention of the artist and the eyes of the inhabitants, stood for flames; alternating with which were other objects, defying description, which stood for souls in purgatory—both souls and flames being of the color of brick upon a background which was slate-colored except for occasional scars in the plaster. The priest, upon turning the bend and directing his gaze, as usual, towards the

shrine, saw something which he was not expecting and which he would have wished not to see.

Two men were stationed facing each other at the confluence, so to speak, of the two byways, the one sitting astride of the coping-wall with one leg dangling outwards and the other foot planted upon the road, his companion leaning against the high wall opposite with arms folded on his breast. Their garb, their bearing, and what could be distinguished, from the point which the priest had reached, of their features, left no room for doubt as to their character. They wore about their heads a green netting falling in a tassel upon their left shoulder, from under which escaped over the forehead a prodigious tuft of hair. Their mustaches were pointed. A shiny leather belt, from which depended a brace of pistols, girdled their waists, and a powder-horn hung like a necklace upon their breast. The hilt of a knife protruded from a pocket of their capacious, loose-hanging breeches, and a great sword hung at their side, its huge guard set with brightly furbished plates of brass arranged in some cabalistic pattern. The first glance sufficed to identify them as members of the class of *bravos*.

This class, now entirely extinct, was at that time very flourishing in Lombardy, and was even then of long standing. The following excerpts will give to the uninitiated reader some idea of the main characteristics of the institution, of the efforts made to stamp it out and of its stubborn and luxuriant vitality.

As far back as April 8, 1583, His Most Illustrious Excellency, Don Carlo of Aragon, Prince of Castelvetrano, Duke of Terranova, Marquis of Avola, Count of Burgeto, Grand Admiral and Grand Constable of Sicily, Governor of Milan and Captain General of His Catholic Majesty in Italy, *having taken full cognizance of the intolerable misery in which the City of Milan lives and has lived by reason of bravos and vagrants,* places them under the ban of the law. *He declares and defines that all those shall be comprehended under this ban and shall be reputed as bravos and vagrants, who, whether aliens or citizens, have no regular trade, or, having one, do not ply the same, but are retained, with or without allowance, by some noble or knight, officer*

or merchant, to espouse his side or second his quarrel, or even, as there is cause to presume, to work scathe to others. He serves an injunction on all such that they quit the country within the term of six days, threatens recusants with the galley and confers upon all agents of justice the most grotesquely large and unrestricted powers to execute the ordinance. But, on April 15 of the following year, the same noble gentleman, noting that *the city is as full as ever of the said bravos, who have resumed their former ways without any amendment of code or diminution of numbers,* promulgates another edict still more drastic and striking, in which, among other provisions, he specifies:

That any person, no matter whether he be a citizen of this town or an alien, who shall appear, upon the testimony of two witnesses, to bear the reputation or notorious character of bravo and pass currently as such, even in the absence of any proof of criminal complicity, solely on the ground of his being so reputed, without further proofs may by the said judges, and by each severally, be put to the rack and tortured to try his guilt, and that, even though no confession of crime be extracted, he may, nevertheless, be committed to the galleys for the aforesaid term of three years on the sole charge of being commonly reputed and notoriously held as a bravo, as hereinbefore recited. All this, and much more which we omit, because *his excellency is determined upon his wish being obeyed by all.*

When one hears such brave words, spoken with such assurance and coupled with such commands, from so noble a lord, one would fain believe that all the bravos vanished forever solely at their detonation. But the testimony of another noble, the weight of whose authority and whose titles is no less, obliges us to believe exactly the opposite. This is His Most Illustrious Excellency, Juan Fernandez de Valasco, Constable of Castille, High Chamberlain of His Majesty, Duke of the City of Frias, Count of Haro and Castelnovo, Noble of the House of Velasco and that of the Seven Children of Lara, Governor of the State of Milan, etc. On June 5, 1593, he also having taken full cognizance *of the harm wrought and the damage inflicted by bravos and vagrants, and of the evil influence of such persons on*

the public weal and the administration of justice, enjoins them anew, within the term of six days, to quit the country, repeating almost the same prescriptions and threats used by his predecessor. Then, on May 23, 1598, *learning with no small degree of displeasure that the number of that certain class* (bravos and vagrants) *is daily on the increase, and that nothing but murders, robberies and premeditated bloodshed is heard of them day or night, together with misdemeanors of every other sort, to the which they lend themselves the more readily that they have the aid of their chiefs and abettors to rely upon,* prescribes anew the same remedies, but in larger doses, as is wont to be done in obstinate diseases. *Let everyone, then,* he concludes, *scrupulously beware of contravening the present edict, or any part thereof, because, instead of experiencing his excellency's leniency, he will experience his severity and anger, his excellency being resolved and determined that this warning shall be final and peremptory.*

Of a different way of thinking, however, was His Most Illustrious Excellency, Don Pietro Enriquez de Acevado, Count of Fuentes, Captain and Governor of the State of Milan; he was of a different way of thinking, and for good reasons. *Being fully cognizant of the misery in which this city and state lives by reason of the great number of bravos who abound in it, and being resolved to extirpate entirely spawn so pernicious,* he promulgates, December 5, 1600, a new edict, full, as usual, of dire penalties, *with the firm purpose that they shall be carried scrupulously into execution with full rigor and without any hope of mitigation.*

We must believe, however, that he did not bring to the task all that hearty good-will which he could muster in engineering intrigues and in raising up enemies against his own arch-enemy, Henry IV; because, on this latter score, history is witness to his success in turning against that king the arms of the Duke of Savoy, whom he caused to forfeit more cities than one, and to his success in drawing the Duke of Biron into a conspiracy and making him pay the forfeit with his head. But as regards that "spawn so pernicious" of bravos, certain it is that on September

22, 1612, it was still germinating. On this date His Most Illustrious Excellency, Don Giovanni de Mendozza, Marquis of La Hynojosa, Gentleman, etc., Governor, etc., thought seriously about their extermination. To this end he sent to Pandolfo and Marco Tullio Malatesti, printers to the royal household, the usual edict, revised and enlarged, to be printed to the undoing of the bravos. They lived, however, to have the same blows, and worse, dealt them on December 24, 1618, by His Most Illustrious Excellency, the noble Don Gomez Suarez de Figueroa, Duke of Feria, etc. These not proving fatal either, His Most Illustrious Excellency, the noble Gonzalo Fernandez de Cordova, under whose administration took place the afternoon walk of Don Abbondio, found himself obliged to re-revise and republish the customary edict against bravos on October 5, 1627, that is, one year, one month and two days before that memorable event.

Nor was this last of publishing; but we feel dispensed from mentioning the succeeding ones as falling outside the period of our story. We shall make only passing mention of one of February 13, 1632, in which His Most Illustrious Excellency, the Duke of Feria, Governor for the second time, informs us that *the most disgraceful crimes are traceable to those who go by the name of bravos*. This much suffices to assure us that, at the time with which we are dealing, bravos really existed.

That the two already described were on the wait for some one was entirely obvious; what pleased Don Abbondio still less was the conviction forced on him by their actions that that some one was he. For at his appearance they had exchanged glances, lifting their heads with a movement which told him that both had said in unison, " 'Tis he." The one in the straddling posture had arisen, drawing his leg up on the road, the other had detached himself from the wall, and both started in his direction. Keeping his breviary open before him all the while, he looked out from under his eyebrows to keep a watch on their movements; and, seeing them coming up to him, he was assailed by a thousand thoughts at once. He inquired hurriedly of himself whether between him and the bravos the road opened anywhere to the right or left; and he remembered promptly that it did not.

He examined himself rapidly to see if he had any score with lordlings or avengers; but even in his agitation of mind the consoling testimony of conscience offered him its modicum of reassurance. The bravos, however, continued to approach, their eyes fastened on him. He inserted the first and second fingers of his left hand under his collar, as if to readjust it, and sliding his fingers along his neck, he at the same time craned his head around, screwing back the corner of his mouth and looking out of the tail of his eye as far as possible to see if any one was approaching; but he saw no one. He shot one glance across the low wall into the fields—no one was there; another, rather more timid, down the road ahead of him—still no one except the bravos. What was he to do? It was too late to turn back, and to take to his heels was the same as saying "Follow me" or worse. Being unable to dodge the danger, he went to meet it; because these moments of uncertainty were by this time so painful that he desired nothing more than to shorten them. Hastening his pace, he recited a verse in a more audible tone, assumed what composure and cheerfulness of countenance he could and made every effort to work up a smile. When he found the two worthies confronting him he breathed a "Now for it," and halted.

"Your reverence," quoth one of them, fixing him with his eye.

"What is your pleasure?" replied Don Abbondio, raising his own from the book, which remained spread open in his hands as if upon a lectern.

"Your reverence contemplates," pursued the other, with the boding, angry mien of one who catches an inferior on the point of doing something to be ashamed of—"your reverence contemplates marrying Renzo Tramaglino and Lucia Mondella tomorrow."

"That is to say," responded Don Abbondio, with a quaver in his voice—"that is to say—Your worships are men of the world and know just how such matters go. The poor priest counts for nothing. They make the muddle themselves, and then—and then they come to us as one would go to demand money of his banker, and we—we are the public's servants."

"Well, then," said the bravo in his ear, but with a tone of

solemn command, "this marriage must not take place, neither tomorrow nor ever."

"But, my good sirs," replied Don Abbondio, with the bland, insinuating voice one takes to persuade a hothead—"but, my dear sirs, be pleased to put yourselves in my place. If the matter depended on me—you see plainly that it puts nothing in my pocket."

"Zounds!" interrupted the bravo. "If the point were to be decided by prating, you would have us on the hip. We know, and wish to know, nothing more about it. Forewarned is fore—You understand."

"But your worships are too fair, too reasonable——"

"Stuff!" this time broke in the other ruffian, who had not spoken thus far. "The marriage must not take place, or" (here a round oath) "he who performs it will not repent, because he will not have the time; and" (here another oath).

"Softly, softly," resumed the first speaker. "His reverence is a man who knoweth the rules of the world, and we are honest folk who mean him no harm, provided he is discreet. Your reverence, the noble Don Rodrigo, our master, pays thee his sincerest respects."

This name, to the mind of Don Abbondio, was like the lightning flash that in the highest fury of the night tempest lights up one's surroundings indistinctly for an instant, while it adds terror to terror. Instinctively he made a low bow, and said: "If your worships could suggest to me——"

"What! make suggestions to your reverence, who can read Latin!" again interrupted the bravo, with a laugh that came somewhere between uncouthness and ferocity. "It is thy concern. And, above all, let no hint transpire of this warning we have given for thy own good; otherwise, ahem! it would be the same as to perform that little marriage ceremony. Come, what answer dost thou wish us to convey to the noble Don Rodrigo?"

"My respects——"

"Be more definite."

"Proceeding—proceeding always from obedience." And, in pronouncing the words, even he did not know whether he was

making a promise or a polite phrase. The bravos took them, or gave evidence of taking them, in their more serious sense.

"Excellent; and good night, reverend sir," said one of them in the act of departing with his companion. Don Abbondio, who but a few moments before would have given one of his eyes to avoid meeting them, now would have liked to prolong the conversation and the parleying. "Your worships—" he began, slamming shut the book. But they, without giving further ear to him, took the road by which he had come and went away singing a coarse song which I am loath to transcribe. Poor Don Abbondio remained a moment gaping, like one under a spell. Then he took that one of the two roads which led home, painfully dragging one leg after the other, as if they had been of lead. What the state of the inner man was will be better understood after a word of explanation about his character and the times in which it was his fate to live.

Don Abbondio (as the reader has already perceived) was not of a lion-hearted nature. But from his earliest years it had been borne in upon him that the saddest of plights in those times was to be sans fangs and sans claws and yet not fired with the ambition to be eaten alive. The power of the law offered no manner of protection to the peaceable, unoffending man devoid of other means of making himself feared. Not at all that there was any dearth of laws and of penalties against individual violence. There was, on the contrary, a surfeit of laws. The crimes were enumerated and specified with prolix minuteness; the penalties, wildly extravagant and augmentable, if need be, in almost every instance at the discretion of the lawmaker himself and of a hundred executives; the procedures, framed only with a view to removing from the judge's way everything which might serve as an obstacle to pronouncing sentence of guilty; as the excerpts we have exhibited from edicts against bravos briefly but faithfully illustrate. Notwithstanding all this, and in great measure because of it all, these edicts, republished and reenforced from one administration to another, served only to attest exuberantly the impotence of their authors; or, if they produced any immediate result, it was to add greatly to the vexations which the

law-abiding and weak already suffered from the turbulent, and to increase unruliness and cunning in the latter.

Immunity from punishment was on an organized basis, and its roots were too deep for edicts to reach, or to be able to remove. Of such a character were asylums, such the privileges of certain classes, in part recognized legally, in part tolerated in sullen silence or assailed with vain remonstrances, but maintained in fact and defended by those classes with the industry of self-interest and the jealousy of punctilio. Now this immunity, to which edicts, while not fatal, were a threat and an affront, would naturally be driven by each threat and each affront to fresh lengths of activity and inventiveness for its self-preservation. This is, in fact, just what happened. The lawless element cast about, upon the appearance of legislation aiming at the suppression of violence, for new expedients out of their stock of very real resources to continue doing what the laws had just prohibited. Their enactment might, on the other hand, prove a continual source of inconvenience and annoyance to the man who went on minding his own business but lacked both the means of self-protection and influence; for, in their effort to have all men under control and to prevent or punish all offences, they simply subjected the private individual's every move to the arbitrary will of magistrates of all possible descriptions. But, did a man take measures before committing his crime to get under cover promptly in some monastery or palace, where police durst not set foot, or did he take no further precaution than to wear a livery which enlisted in his defence the vanity and interested assistance of a powerful family or of a whole clan, he could follow his practices in safety and laugh at the bluster of edicts.

Of those on whom it devolved to enforce their provisions, some belonged by birth to the privileged side and others were the creatures of its power; both had adopted its maxims and clung to them by force of education and community of interest, of habit and imitation, and would have thought a long time before violating them for the sake of a scrap of paper posted in the market-place. As for those entrusted with the immediate task of physically executing the laws, even though they had been

enterprising as heroes, obedient as monks and self-sacrificing as martyrs, they would never have been able to compass it, inferior as they were numerically to those whom there was question of subduing and extremely liable to be left in the lurch by those whose behests, in the abstract, or, as we say, in theory, they were carrying out. But, in addition, they were generally the most worthless and degenerate creatures of their age, and their office was held in contempt even by those who had reason to dread it, while their legal title was a byword. It was, therefore, very natural that, instead of risking, nay, of throwing away, their lives in a hopeless undertaking, they should put up their inaction, and even their connivance, for sale to the powerful, and should reserve the exercise of their execrated authority and of the power they might really be said to possess for those occasions in which there was no danger—that is, in oppressing and annoying the law-abiding and defenceless.

The man who contemplates aggression or who is momentarily apprehensive of it, naturally seeks allies and fellowship. Hence the tendency of individuals to align themselves in classes, to create additional classes and to seek each the aggrandizement of that to which he belongs, was in that day carried to its fullest development. The clergy were alert to maintain and extend their immunities, the nobility their privileges and the military their exemptions. Merchants and artisans were banded together in guilds and confraternities, the legal profession constituted a union, and even leeches an incorporated society. Each of these petty oligarchies wielded a certain power that was all its own. In each the individual discovered the advantage of employing in his own interest the strength that comes from unity and in exploiting it according to the weight of his influence and the measure of his adroitness. The more upright availed themselves of this advantage solely in self-defence; schemers and knaves seized on it to carry through some low intrigue to which their own resources would have been unequal and to come off with impunity. The strength of these various associations was, however, very unevenly balanced, and especially in the country the turbulent noble in affluent circumstances, surrounded as he was

by his cohort of bravos and a population of peasants habituated by family tradition, or led by considerations of interest or necessity, to regard themselves as the subjects and soldiers of the landlord, exercised a power which any local unit would scarcely have been able to dispute.

Our friend Abbondio, being without birth, without wealth, and more hopeless still without courage, had become sensible almost before reaching the age of discretion that, in such a state of society, he was like an earthen vessel compelled to travel cheek by jowl with vessels of iron. Hence he had most dutifully obeyed his relatives when they wished him to become a priest. Not, in truth, that he worried himself much about the duties and lofty ends of the ministry to which he was consecrating himself. Gaining an easy livelihood and getting into an influential and honored body of men had seemed to him a pair of reasons more than sufficient for such a choice. But no order whatsoever will protect an individual or assume responsibility for him beyond a certain point. None of them will exempt him from committing himself to some course of his own. Don Abbondio, being perpetually engrossed with the thought of living unmolested, bothered not his head about such advantages as entailed much exertion or some risk on the aspirant. His policy was, mainly, to steer clear of all disputes and to yield in those from which there was no escape. In all the wars which broke out around him, from the contentions then rife between the clergy and the civil authorities, between the military and civilians, between noble and noble, down to altercations between peasants with words as their starting point and blows or dagger-thrusts for their arbitrament, he maintained an attitude of unarmed neutrality. If he found himself absolutely compelled to choose sides between antagonist and antagonist, he sided with the stronger, in a paltering way, however, and contriving to show the other that he was not inimical of his own volition. "Why," he appeared to say to him, "could not you have prevailed, that I might now be standing on your side of the fence?" Thus, by giving a wide berth to powerful malefactors, by shutting his eyes to their unpremeditated and passing deeds of lawlessness, by acquiescing obsequiously in those

that were more grievous and deliberate, by cajoling the surliest into giving him a smile when he met them in the street, the poor man had succeeded in passing his three score of years without serious squalls.

It must not be imagined, however, that he lacked his own little share of spleen; and this continued restraint upon his temper, this practice of acceding, right or wrong, to others, these many bitter draughts he had to swallow in silence, would have increased its virulence to the point of impairing his health, had he not been able to vent it occasionally. But in such a big world there were persons, and those not far away, whom he knew perfectly well to be harmless beings, and on these he would now and then pour out the vials of his long-repressed wrath and thus indulge his own inclination to play at tantrums and scold unjustly. He was also a severe critic of those whose rules of conduct differed from his own, when, however, the criticism might be ventilated without any danger, be it never so remote. The vanquished was, at the very least, an imprudent fellow; the slain man had always been a brawler. With the man who had pitted himself against some powerful opponent and come off with a cracked pate Don Abbondio could always pick on some fault to find—which, moreover, is not a difficult thing to do, seeing that right and wrong are not separated so cleanly that one side has with it all the right or all the wrong. But above all, he declaimed against those of his confrères who at their own risk took up the cudgels for some poor victim of persecution against his powerful oppressor. This he used to call a wanton quest of trouble and a wishing to take the humps off camels' backs, and he would add with severity that it was entangling one's self in secular things to the prejudice of the dignity of the sacred ministry. Against such he inveighed, always, however, in the absence of a third party or in a very small group, with so much the more vehemence as they were known to be less given to resentment in matters affecting themselves personally. He had a favorite saying, which was always for him the last word in discoursing on such matters, that an honest citizen who minds his own business and keeps his place gets into no scrapes.

Let my five-and-twenty readers now try to imagine how the poor man must have been affected by the incidents we have related. What with the fright he had taken of those hideous faces and ominous words, the threats he had received from a noble who was known not to threaten in vain, the sudden ruin of his quiet plan of life, built up at the price of so many years of study and patience, the predicament out of which no door seemed to open, the bowed head of Don Abbondio was in a whirl indeed. "If Renzo," he mused, "could be made to go his way in peace by a simple 'No,' what harm? But he will want some reason. And what reason have I to give, in the name of Heaven? Hm-m-m-m. There is another Tartar for you; mild as a lamb as long as he is left alone, but attempt to cross him, and—Ugh! And with his head turned, besides, about that Lucia—as lovelorn as—Silly young fools! For the lack of something better to do, they must fall in love and go a-marrying, and never a thought beyond. Little do they care how much anguish a respectable poor man suffers on their account. Alack! alack! I'd like to know what right that twain of horrors had to plant themselves right in my path and take me to task. How do I come into it? Is it I who would be married? Why did they not go instead to speak with—? Hah! Just see, now! What an unlucky mortal I am, that the right thing to do always occurs to me five minutes after the occasion has gone by. Now, if I had only thought of suggesting that they betake their embassy to——!"

But, at this stage, he became aware that these regrets for not having instigated and abetted wrongdoing were too unconscionably wicked in him, and he directed the full content of his angry thoughts against the one who was coming thus to rob him of his peace. He did not know Don Rodrigo except by sight and by reputation, nor had he ever dealt with him further than to cringe, hat in hand, to the ground on the few occasions when he had met him on the road. He had had, more times than one, to defend that noble's reputation against those who, between sighs, raised their eyes to heaven and, with bated breath, cursed some of his doings. He had said a hundred times that he was an estimable nobleman. But in that moment he called him in his

own heart all the names which he had never heard others apply without cutting them short with a "Fie-on-you!" With his mind in a tumult of such thoughts he reached the door of his house in the lower end of the hamlet, and, hurriedly thrusting the key, which he was holding in his hand, into the lock, he opened and went in, drawing the bolt carefully afterwards. Immediately, in his impatience for trustworthy companionship, he called out: "Perpetua! Perpetua!" advancing at the same time towards the chamber where she was certain to be, laying the cloth for the evening meal. Perpetua, as everyone perceives, was Don Abbondio's housekeeper; a devoted and faithful servant, who knew how to obey or to make herself obeyed, as occasion required, and could, at the proper time, bear with her master's grumblings and crotchets or make him in turn bear with her own; which latter were daily becoming more frequent, seeing that she had already passed the canonical age of forty without marrying—in consequence, as she herself told it, of having refused all the suitors who had sought her hand, or, as her friends said, of her never having found an old shoe to pair up with.

"I am coming," she replied, setting down in its accustomed place on the desk the measure of Don Abbondio's favorite wine and starting slowly in his direction. But she had not reached the threshold of the door when he came in, with such a heavy step, with his brow so beclouded and his countenance so perturbed, that it would not have needed eyes so keen as Perpetua's to discover that something altogether unusual had happened.

"Mercy on us! What is wrong, master?"

"Nothing, nothing," replied Don Abbondio, sinking breathless into his armchair.

"How? Nothing? And is it I you would have think so? Upset as your reverence is? Something most untoward hath happened."

"Peace! in Heaven's name! When I say it is nothing, either it is nothing, or it is something I may not tell."

"That you may not tell even to me? And who will look after your reverence's health, then? Who will lend you advice?——"

"Alack! Will you hold your tongue? And leave off setting the table. Give me a glass of wine."

"And your reverence would hold that nothing is wrong!" said Perpetua, filling the glass and keeping hold of it as if she would relinquish it only in reward for the confidences that were so slow in coming.

"Give here! Give here!" said Don Abbondio, taking the glass away from her with a hand none too steady and emptying it at one gulp, as if it had been so much medicine.

"Then your reverence would see me going around perforce inquiring what hath happened to my master?" insisted Perpetua, standing confronting him with arms akimbo and her glance fastened on him, as if she would draw the secret out through his eyes.

"In Heaven's name, don't go gossiping and noise the thing abroad. My—my life's at stake."

"Your life?"

"My life."

"Your reverence well knoweth that, whenever you have told me aught frankly, in confidence, I have never——"

"Bravo! As, for instance, when——"

Perpetua perceived that she had struck the wrong chord; hence, quickly changing her tone, "My good master," she said in melting accents, "I have always been devoted to you; and if now I wish to know more, it is through solicitude, because I would fain be of assistance to you, give you good advice, cheer you——"

The fact is that Don Abbondio was probably as anxious to be unbosomed of his painful secret as Perpetua was to learn it. Hence, after making an ever-weakening resistance to the increasing violence of her fresh offensives, after making her swear over and over that she would not breathe a word of it, he at length, with much hemming and hawing and condoling with himself, told her his miserable plight. When he came to the name of the sender of the message, Perpetua had to make another and more solemn oath of secrecy, and when the name had been pronounced, Don Abbondio fell back with a great sigh into the

depths of his armchair, raising his hands in an attitude of both command and entreaty. "Now, in Heaven's name——"

"His old tricks!" exclaimed Perpetua. "Oh, the scoundrel! the tyrant! the enemy of God and man!"

"Will you hold your tongue! Or would you be my utter ruination?"

"Oh! no one will hear us talking alone here. But whatever will you do, my poor master?"

"See that, now," said Don Abbondio in an angry tone; "see what fine advice she gives me. She comes and asks me what I shall do. What shall I do? As if she were in straits and it was for me to help her out."

"Well, I have my poor bit of advice to give; and yet——"

"And yet, and yet, and yet; let us hear what it is."

"My advice is that, since every one sayeth what a holy man our archbishop is, with no end of courage, and that it warms the cockles of his heart when, to uphold one of his priests, he can bring one of those ruffianly nobles to time, I should think, and I do think, that your reverence should write him a good plain letter, telling him the why and wherefore——"

"Hold your tongue! hold your tongue! What kind of advice is that to give a poor man? If a bullet were sent through my head (God forbid!), would the archbishop give me a sound headpiece again?"

"Poh! Bullets are not passed about like comfits at a christening. And God help us if these dogs were to bite whenever they barked. And I have always observed that those who have wit enough to show their teeth and hold up their heads command respect; and just because your reverence never asserts himself, we are brought to a pass where every one cometh (saving your presence) and——"

"Will you hold your tongue?"

"I'll hold my tongue directly; and yet there is no doubt that, when people are aware that a man is always ready, at every juncture, to draw in his——"

"A truce to your shrewishness! Is this the time to preach absurdities?"

"I have said my say now. Your reverence can think it over tonight. In the meantime do not make yourself ill and ruin your health. Eat a mouthful of something."

"Yes, *I* shall think it over," replied Don Abbondio, muttering to himself. "To be sure, 'tis *I* shall think it over. *I* have food for thought." And rising up, he continued muttering: "No, I'll take nothing, nothing at all; that's not what worries me. It's well I know that *I* must think it over. But why did it have to befall me of all others?"

"At least swallow this thimbleful," said Perpetua, pouring it out. "Your reverence knows that it always braceth you up."

"Bah! 'Twill not serve, 'twill not serve, 'twill not serve."

So saying, he took the light, and, mumbling incessantly: "A fine to-do! for a peaceable man like me! and tomorrow what?" and other similar lamentations, he started up to his room. On reaching the threshold, he turned around towards Perpetua, placed the tip of his finger on his lips, and, saying: "In the name of Heaven!" in slow and solemn tones, withdrew.

Chapter II

We are told that the Prince of Condé slept soundly the night before the battle of Rocroi; but, in the first place, he was tired out, and, in the second place, he had given all the necessary commands and had settled upon his plan of action for the morning. Don Abbondio, on the contrary, only knew as yet that the morrow would be his day of battle; and hence a great part of the night was spent in painful deliberations. To ignore injunction and threats and perform the marriage was a course he would not even consider; and to confide the circumstance to Renzo and determine with him upon some expedient—God forbid! "Let no hint transpire—otherwise—ahem!" had said one of the bravos; and at the sound of that "Ahem!" reverberating through his mind, far from meditating any disobedience to his instructions, he even repented of having prattled to Perpetua. As for flight, there was no place to fly to. And again, there would be awkward situations to meet and questions to answer! At every plan that he rejected the poor man turned over again in his bed. What appeared to him to be by all means the best course, or the least evil, was to gain time and shilly-shally with Renzo. The recollection that the marriage season would close within a few days came pat to his purpose. "If," he reflected, "I can stave off the stripling for these few days, I shall have a breathing space of two months, and a deal can come to pass in two months." He pondered the pretexts to bring forward, and although they looked somewhat flimsy, he proceeded, nevertheless, to reassure himself, thinking that his authority would make up for what they lacked in weight, and that his seasoned experience would give him a big advantage against a callow youth. "We shall see," he said to himself. "He hath a mistress to take thought for, and I have to take thought for a whole skin; I have more at stake, to say nothing of a riper wit. I know not what you are to do for your love-pains, my lad, but I am not going

to pay the piper." His mind being thus brought somewhat to rest by a decision, he was able at length to close his eyes; but such sleep and such dreams as ensued! It was one long procession of bravos, Don Rodrigos and Renzos; a panorama of lanes and cliffs; an unceasing alternation of flying heels and footsteps in pursuit, punctuated by screams and musket-shots.

The first awakening after a disaster or in some perplexity is a very bitter moment. With the first gleam of consciousness the mind falls back upon the customary ideas of the old, tranquil life; but instantly the new state of things bursts rudely upon us and our pain is made more keen by the momentary contrast. After having tasted the anguish of such a moment, Don Abbondio rehearsed his program of the night before, arose and remained fearfully, yet impatiently, awaiting Renzo.

Lorenzo, or, as he was known by all, Renzo, did not keep him waiting long. At the very first instant at which he deemed he might, without indiscretion, present himself, he set off for his pastor's with the impetuous joy of a man of twenty years who is that day to marry her whom he loves. Ever since the beginning of his youth he had been both fatherless and motherless and had plied the trade of silk-spinning, which was hereditary, so to speak, in his family. It had been a very lucrative trade in the years gone by, but was now already on the decline, though it had not reached a point where a skilful workman might not eke out a fair livelihood. Work was becoming slacker and slacker from day to day, but the continual exodus of operatives into the neighboring territory, whither they were attracted by promises, privileges and fat wages, enabled those who still remained at home to get along. Besides this, Renzo owned a small plot of ground, which he hired a man to work for him and on which he worked himself when the silk-mill was idle; so that, for one in his state of life, he might be called well-off. And, although it was a leaner year than those which had gone before and a real famine was beginning to make itself felt, our young friend, who had turned thrifty once he had set his eye on Lucia, was well enough provided and would have no difficulty in keeping the wolf from the door. He appeared before Don Abbondio in his

best holiday attire, his hat garnished with different-colored feathers, his brave-hilted dagger in his breeches pocket, and with an air of gaiety and at the same time of bravado about him such as was then common even with the quietest of men. Don Abbondio's hesitating, mysterious way of receiving him served as a singular contrast to the open-hearted, straightforward manner of the younger man.

"He must have some bee in his bonnet," reasoned Renzo. Then he said: "I have come, your reverence, to learn at what time it will be convenient for you to have us in the church."

"On what day?"

"On what day? Do you not remember that we had fixed on today?"

"Today?" replied Don Abbondio, as if it was the first time he had heard of it. "Today, today—do not lose thy temper, but I cannot today."

"You cannot today! What hath happened?"

"First of all, I am not well, d'ye see?"

"I am sorry, but what you have to do is a question of so little time and trouble——"

"And then, besides——"

"Then besides, what?"

"Besides, there are certain difficulties."

"Difficulties? What difficulties can there be?"

"There were need to be in my shoes to know how snarly these matters are—how many accounts we have to render. I am too kind-hearted by half. I think only of smoothing the way, of making things easy, of falling in with good pleasure of others, and I let my duty suffer. Then I am censured, and worse."

"Now, in Heaven's name, keep me not thus on the rack, but tell me fairly and squarely what is the matter?"

"Do you know all the formalities to be gone through before a marriage can be regularly performed?"

"I must needs know something of them," said Renzo, beginning to get angry; "you have served me such a bellyful of them these past days. But is that business not all settled now? Hath not everything been done that there was to do?"

"Everything, yes, as it seemeth to you; because, with your forbearance, I have been ass enough to slight my duty, that other people might not be put about. And now—but no, I say no more. We poor priests are between the upper and nether millstones. You lose patience. I am sorry for you, my poor lad, but our superiors— There, everything must not be told. But it is we who bear the brunt of it."

"But tell me without more ado what other formality is to be complied with, as you say must be done, and it shall be attended to straightway."

"Do you know how many diriment impediments there are?"

"What should I know of impediments?"

"Error, conditio, votum, cognatio, crimen,

"Cultus disparitas, vis, ordo, ligamen, honestas,

"Si sis affinis—" Don Abbondio was beginning, telling them off on his fingers.

"Are you making sport of me?" interrupted the youth. "What should I make out of your latinorums?"

"And therefore, if you understand not such things, leave them to one who does, and have patience."

"Hah!——"

"Come, my dear Renzo, do not fly into a rage. I am ready to do—whatever is in my power to do. I—I would fain see thee satisfied. I like thee, in truth I do. Pshaw!—when I think how well off you were, what more did you want? You're bitten with the maggot to marry——"

"What kind of talk is this, my good sir?" Renzo broke forth, stupefaction and rage contending on his countenance.

"Mere talk, forbear; mere talk. I would fain see thee satisfied."

"In short——"

"In short, my lad, the fault is not mine; the law is none of my making. Before performing a marriage there are many, many investigations we are bound to make to satisfy ourselves that no impediment exists."

"But a pox of it! Will you tell me once for all what impediment has come up?"

"Have patience! These are not questions to be resolved off-hand. No impediment at all, I hope. Still the investigation must be made all the same. The text is clear as daylight: *antequam matrimonium denunciet*——"

"I've told you that I'll have no Latin."

"But you would have me explain——"

"Have you not made these investigations?"

"Not all that I should, I tell you."

"And why did you not make them at the proper time? Why tell me that all was attended to? Why did you wait——"

"Look now! You tax me with my over-kindness. I have made everything easy, so that you would not have to wait; but—but now, I have received—enough; I know what I say."

"And what am I to do?"

"Keep your patience a few days. A few days are not forever, my lad. Be resigned."

"How long?"

"Clear sailing," thought Don Abbondio; and with more graciousness than ever, "Come," quoth he, "in a fortnight I shall try—do my best——"

"A fortnight! Hah! listen to what he tells me! All you required hath been done, the day was set, the day comes along, and now you tell me I must wait a fortnight," he resumed in a still louder and angrier voice, raising his arm and brandishing his fist in the air. Heaven only knows what terrible adjunct he would have coupled with the word, had not Don Abbondio interrupted him, taking him by the other arm with an amiability born of fear and cautiousness: "Come, come, don't exasperate yourself, in the name of Heaven. I shall see—I shall try in a week——"

"And what am I to say to Lucia?"

"That it's my blunder."

"And what will people say?"

"Tell everybody that I have made the blunder—out of over-haste, d'ye see—out of excessive kindness. Put all the blame on me. Could I do more? Come, in a week."

"And there will not be some other impediment then?"

"When I say——"

"All right. I shall be patient for a week; but remember that, when that is passed, I shall not be satisfied any longer with child's talk. In the meanwhile, my respects." Saying this, he went off, making Don Abbondio a scantier bow than usual, and putting more meaning than reverence into his glance.

Upon coming out and wending his way, reluctantly for the first time, towards the house of his betrothed, a prey to angry feelings, he turned back in his mind upon the interview, and found it odder than ever. Don Abbondio's cold, embarrassed reception, his constrained but peevish utterance, the shifting of those grey eyes of his as he talked, as if they were afraid of encountering his words, his pretended surprise about the marriage that had been so expressly planned, and, above all, his insistence upon some tremendously important matter on which he would say nothing with clearness—all these circumstances taken together made Renzo think that there was some mystery underneath other than what Don Abbondio would have had him believe. The youth remained in two minds for an instant about returning and forcing the other to speak plainly, but, lifting his eyes, he saw Perpetua ahead of him turn into a garden some few paces off from the house. He called to her as she was opening the wicket and quickened his pace to overtake her, detaining her afterwards in the gateway. Thinking to extract something more definite from her, he paused to gossip.

"Good morning, Perpetua. I had hoped that we should be making merry together today."

"God's will be done, my poor Renzo."

"Do me a kindness. That precious wag of a priest hath been imposing on my simplicity with certain reasonings which I could not follow. Do you resolve me more clearly why he cannot, or will not, marry me today."

"Oh! do you imagine that I know my master's secrets?"

"Just as I thought—some mystery," thought Renzo. Then, to uncover it, he continued: "Come, Perpetua, we are friends; tell me what you know. Help a poor fellow."

"This being born poor is a bad thing, Renzo."

"True enough," he rejoined, his suspicions growing always stronger. And, trying to get around to the main question, "True enough," he added; "but is it for priests to deal hardly with the poor?"

"Listen, Renzo, I can tell you naught, because—I know naught to tell; but this I can assure you: my master doth not wish to wrong you or any one else, and he is not to blame."

"Who is to blame, then?" asked Renzo with a certain effort at indifference, but with his heart standing still and straining ears.

"When I tell you I know naught—yet in defence of my master I can speak, because it goeth against me to have him put down as wishing to bring grief on any one. The poor man! if he makes mistakes, it is out of his goodness of heart. But in this world there is no lack of scoundrels, piratical nobles, men lost to the fear of God Himself——"

"Scoundrels! piratical nobles!" thought Renzo. "These be no superiors." "Come," said he, laboring to hide his increasing agitation—"come, tell me who it is."

"Ho! you would fain make me talk, and I cannot talk, because—I know naught to tell. When I know naught to tell, it's the same as if I had been sworn to secrecy. You could put me to the torture and not wring one word more from me. Good-by; it's lost time for both of us." Saying this, she hurried into the garden, closing the wicket after her. Renzo returned her farewell and retraced his way quietly so as not to make her suspect the direction he was taking; but, when he was out of earshot, he hastened his pace and in an instant was at Don Abbondio's door. He entered, and, going straight to the room where he had left him, he found him still there and rushed towards him, defiance in his manner and his eyes rolling wildly about.

"How! how? What strange departure is this?" said Don Abbondio.

"Who is this high-handed noble," said Renzo in the tone of voice of a man who is bent upon obtaining preciseness of answer—"who is this high-handed noble who is not willing that I should marry Lucia?"

"What's that? what's that?" stammered the poor surprised victim, his face becoming as white and flaccid in an instant as linen plucked from the boiling. And, still muttering, he gave a spring from the armchair and darted for the door. Renzo, who must have been expecting such a move, stood on the alert and, rushing to the door ahead of him, turned the key and put it into his pocket.

"Hah! now you shall speak, my reverend sir. Every one knoweth my business but myself, and, by'r Lady, I want to know it too. What is his name?"

"Renzo! Renzo! Consider what you are doing, I beseech you; think of your soul."

"I think that I am going to find out his name at once—this very instant," and, so saying, he placed his hand, perhaps without adverting to it, upon the hilt of the dagger that projected from his pocket.

"God have mercy!" exclaimed Don Abbondio feebly.

"I wish to know his name."

"Who told you——"

"No, no; no more quibbling. Plain speaking and despatch."

"Do you want my life forfeited?"

"I want to know what I am entitled to know."

"But, if I speak, I am a dead man. Is my life no consideration?"

"Therefore speak out."

"Therefore" was pronounced with so much emphasis, and Renzo's aspect became so menacing, that Don Abbondio could not even imagine the possibility of disobeying him.

"Do you promise—do you swear," he said, "to speak of it to no one; never to say a——"

"I promise that I shall do something rash unless you tell me that man's name out of hand."

At this new adjuration Don Abbondio, his face and eyes wearing the expression of a person with the dentist's tweezers in his mouth, gasped forth, "Don——"

"Don?" repeated Renzo, as if to assist his patient in getting

out the rest, at the same time bending over him, with his ear turned downwards, arms rigid and clenched fists.

"Don Rodrigo!" hurriedly articulated the helpless thrall, blurting out these few syllables and gliding over the consonants, partly as a result of his agitation, partly because, directing what little power of attention remained at his command towards effecting a compromise between his two fears, he apparently wished to obliterate the word at the same time that he was compelled to pronounce it.

"Hah! the bandog!" roared Renzo. "And how did he proceed? What did he tell you to——?"

"How? Yes; how? how?" replied Don Abbondio in tones of indignation, feeling that, after so great a sacrifice, he had somehow become the creditor.

"How, eh? I would it had come to your door as it hath to mine, who am an outsider in the matter, and some of your notions would be knocked out of your head." Here he set himself to painting in fearful colors his ugly encounter; and, becoming more and more conscious as he proceeded of angry emotions which, up to that, had been hidden confusedly beneath his fear, and, seeing at the same time that Renzo stood motionless, half in rage and half in bewilderment, his head bowed upon his breast, he continued with a will: "A fine piece of work you have done! A fine way you have served me! To put upon a respectable man after this fashion, and your pastor at that! in his own house! on holy ground! You have done something to boast of, to force me to speak words that will be your scathe and mine, too, when I was withholding them for prudence sake and your own best interests. And now that you know all, I'd like to see what you are going to do about—! But, in Heaven's name, remember that he is not joking. It is not a question of right or wrong with him, but of might. And this morning, when I was advising you aright, hoity-toity! what a dudgeon you must get into directly. My judgment would have served the two of us, but there you are! Open the door, at least, and give me my key."

"It may have been wrong in me," replied Renzo, his tone

relenting towards Don Abbondio, but with a note of hatred in it against his newly discovered enemy.

"It may have been wrong, but place your hand on your breast and think whether in my place——"

He had taken the key from his pocket while saying these words and was going to open the door. Don Abbondio followed him, and drawing near while he was turning the key in the lock, he raised his right hand aloft with a look of anxious solemnity on his face, as if to reciprocate the assistance Renzo had just rendered him, saying: "Swear at least——"

"It may have been wrong, and I ask your pardon," replied Renzo, opening the door and making ready to go out.

"Swear—" rejoined Don Abbondio, grasping hold of his arm with a trembling hand.

"It may have been wrong," repeated Renzo, releasing himself and rushing away, thus cutting short a debate which, like debates in literature, philosophy and other matters, might else have lasted for centuries, since each side only reiterated its own arguments.

"Perpetua! Perpetua!" cried Don Abbondio, after calling in vain after the fugitive. Perpetua did not answer. Don Abbondio did not know whether he was standing on his head or his heels.

It has happened more than once to persons in higher stations than Don Abbondio's to find themselves so hemmed in with difficulties and so much at a loss which way to decide that it seemed an excellent device to take to bed of a fever. Don Abbondio did not have to go in search of such a device, because it thrust itself upon him. His terror of the preceding day and his excruciating vigil that night, his fear for the present and his anxiety for the future, produced their effect. In his distress and consternation of mind he disposed himself in his armchair, and, already feeling an aching in his bones, he sat looking at his finger nails, sighing and calling from time to time in trembling, petulant accents: "Perpetua!" At length she came, putting a good face on it, as if nothing had happened, carrying a large cabbage under her arm. I shall spare my reader the details of their interview: Don Abbondio's piteous tale of woe and Perpetua's efforts to

solace him; the alternate accusations and denials; the "Who else could have told?" on the one side and the "I told nothing" on the other; the hopeless entanglement, in brief, into which that conversation developed. Suffice it to say that Don Abbondio ordered Perpetua to bolt the door and not to open it under any circumstances, and to answer from the window, in the event of any one's knocking, that the pastor had gone to bed with a fever. He then slowly climbed the stairs, saying at every third step, "It's all up with me now," and went to bed, where we shall leave him.

Renzo in the meanwhile was walking homewards at a furious pace, undetermined what to do, but in the mood for terrible, unheard-of things. Those who are given to unjust provocation or aggression, or who wrong the neighbor in whatever way it may be, are guilty not only of the evil they themselves do, but of the demoralization they effect in the souls of their victims. There was nothing lawless or bloodthirsty about Renzo. He was an open, guileless sort of youth; but at that moment murder was in his heart, and his mind could do nothing but conjure up visions of ambuscades. He would fain have run to the house of Don Rodrigo, seize him by the throat and—but it flashed across his mind that it was practically a fortress, with its garrison of bravos within and its pickets without; that only recognized friends and servants could pass without being inspected from head to foot; that an unknown artisan like himself could not get by without examination, and that he above all—it was probably only too well known he would be. He then fancied himself taking his musket and ensconcing himself behind some hedge, waiting, waiting, waiting, for the time when his enemy should pass by alone. Then, giving himself up with savage delight to this contemplation, in imagination he heard a footfall—"It is he!" Noiselessly raising his head, he recognizes the caitiff, and, bringing the piece to his shoulder, he takes aim and fires. He sees him fall to the earth and his body convulsed in death. He calls down a curse upon him and runs for the frontier and safety— And Lucia?— No sooner did this name come athwart his sinister broodings than the best impulses of his nature fol-

lowed trooping after. It brought up before him his last recollection of his parents, the thought of God, of the Madonna and the saints. He reflected upon the consoling consciousness of being free from crime that had so often filled him with gladness and upon the horror he had so often felt on hearing some one tell about a murder; and he awoke from his dream of blood, terror-stricken and remorseful, and at the same time with a kind of joy at having sinned only in imagination. But what a flood of thoughts that of Lucia let loose upon him! How many hopes and plighted vows, how many dreams of the future on which he had built so confidently, and of this day for which he had so longed! And now how was he to break this news to her, and what should be his course afterward? How was he to make her his in spite of that wicked tyrant's strength? Together with all these thoughts there flitted across his mind, not a well-defined suspicion, but a shadow that tormented him. This outrage of Don Rodrigo's could have been instigated only by a brutal passion for Lucia. That she had given him the slightest occasion or the smallest encouragement was a thought which could not find a moment's lodging in Renzo's mind. But had she been acquainted with it? Could he have conceived such an infamous passion without her perceiving it? Would he have pushed matters so far before sounding her in some way? And Lucia had never said a word about it to him!—to her betrothed!

Swayed by thoughts such as these, he passed by his own house, which was in the middle of the village, and pursued his way to Lucia's, who lived at the extreme end, or even a little outside. The cottage had a little front yard separating it from the street, from which it was fenced in. Renzo entered the yard, and a confused hum of voices flowing without intermission from an upper room met his ears. They would be, he supposed, friends and gossips come to form Lucia's nuptial train, and he was loath to show himself before a crowd with such news as he carried in his breast and written on his face. A little damsel who happened in the yard ran up to him, crying: "The bridegroom! the bridegroom!"

"Hush, Bettina! hush!" said Renzo. "Come hither. Go up-

stairs, draw Lucia aside and whisper in her ear—but so that no one will hear or suspect anything, now—that I am waiting to speak to her in the room below, and tell her to hurry." The child ran up the stairs, delighted, proud of the secret commission she had been given.

Lucia was just leaving her mother's hand after receiving the last touches to her toilet. The women-folk had taken possession of the bride and were at war with her to show herself. She was parrying their advances with the saucy coyness of a peasant maiden, shielding her face with her elbow and looking out from under it, her long black eyebrows contracted into a frown, but with her lips parted in a smile. Her youthful tresses, their raven blackness cleft in the middle by the ivory seam of her skin, were coiled behind in a wealth of plaits secured by silver bodkins arranged like the spokes of a wheel and suggestive of an aureola —a style affected by the women of Lombardy to this day. Around her neck hung a string of garnets and gold beads in filigree. Her bodice was of flowered brocade, and its slashed sleeves were laced down by gay-colored ribbons.

A short petticoat of spun silk, closely plaited, crimson-colored stockings and slippers of embroidered silk completed her apparel. In addition to these charms, proper to her wedding-day, Lucia possessed the perennial charm of reasonably good looks, heightened now by the various emotions depicted on her countenance—joy, mingled with excitement, and that melancholy which is seen at times on the face of a bride, and which, without marring her loveliness, lends it a distinctive character. Little Bettina thrust herself into the group and found her way to Lucia, to whom she adroitly intimated that she had something to communicate, whispering it thereupon in her ear.

"I shall be gone but a moment," said Lucia to the women, and went below. Seeing Renzo's altered countenance and uneasy bearing, "What is the matter?" she said, not without awful presentiments.

"Lucia," replied Renzo, "our plans for today are all upset, and God knoweth when we shall be husband and wife."

"What?" said Lucia in dismay. Renzo told her briefly the

story of the morning. She listened distraught, and, hearing the name of Don Rodrigo, "Ah!" she exclaimed, blushing and trembling, "has it come to this?"

"Then you knew—?" quoth Renzo.

"Only too well," replied Lucia. "But that it should have come to this!"

"What knowledge had you?"

"Do not make me speak now; do not force me to weep. I shall run and call my mother and dismiss the women. We must be alone."

As she was leaving Renzo muttered: "And you told nothing to me."

"Ah, Renzo!" replied Lucia, turning for a moment without stopping. Renzo well understood that his name, pronounced in such a tone by Lucia at that moment, meant: Can you doubt that I kept silence only for sound and virtuous reasons?

In the meantime honest Agnese (such was the name of Lucia's mother), her suspicions and curiosity having been aroused by the whispered conference and her daughter's disappearance, had come down to see what news there was. Her daughter left her with Renzo, and, returning to the company, she controlled her voice and countenance as best she might and said: "The pastor is ill, and nothing will be done today." With this she bade them a hurried good-bye and went downstairs again.

The women followed one another out and scattered into groups to discuss the event. Two or three went as far as the priest's to ascertain if he were really ill.

"A raging fever," returned Perpetua from the window; and these words, reported to the rest, nipped the conjectures which were already beginning to bud in their minds and to be hinted at darkly in their talk.

Chapter III

Lucia entered the room while Renzo was still distractedly engaged with his story and Agnese was listening, equally distraught. They both turned expectantly to her, as the one who held the key to the situation, for an explanation that could not but be painful. One detected in the midst of their grief a pique against Lucia, after the fashion of the love which each bore her, for her reticence on such a matter above all. Agnese, although breathless to hear what her daughter had to say, could not refrain from chiding her: "Never to have told such a thing to your own mother!"

"I shall tell all now," replied Lucia, drying her eyes with her apron.

"Begin, begin!" cried her mother and lover with one voice.

"Holy Mother of God!" exclaimed Lucia; "who could have thought things would have come to this!" Then, in a voice broken by sobs, she related how, in returning from the silk-mill a few days before, she had lagged behind her companions and had come face to face with Don Rodrigo in company with another nobleman; how the former had tried to gain her ear with remarks which were, as she said, not exactly proper; but that she, without heeding him, had quickened her pace and rejoined her companions, having meanwhile heard the other noble burst into a loud laugh and Don Rodrigo say: "Let us lay a wager." On the following day they had crossed her path again; but Lucia was in the midst of her companions and had her eyes cast down. The strange nobleman guffawed and Don Rodrigo said: "We shall see, we shall see." "Heaven be praised," continued Lucia, "that was the last day the mill ran. At once I related——"

"To whom?" asked Agnese, anticipating her disclosure of the favored confidant, not without some little indignation.

"To Father Cristoforo in confession, mamma," replied Lucia

in a mild, apologetic tone. "I related the case fully to him the last time we went to the monastery together to church; and, if you recall, I kept fussing with one thing after another on that morning to kill time and tarry for some company bound in the same direction, because, after such an encounter, I was afraid of the highway——"

At the revered name of Father Cristoforo, Agnese's indignation melted. "You did well," said she. "But why not have related the case fully to your mother, too?"

Lucia had had two good reasons: one, not to worry nor scare the good woman about things which she could not mend; the other, not to expose a story, which she wished to hide jealously, to the danger of being bandied from mouth to mouth—the more, since Lucia hoped that her wedding would put an end to this abominable persecution at its inception. Of the two reasons, however, she alleged only the former.

"And was I," she then said, turning to Renzo, in the tone of voice one uses in remonstrating with a friend—"and was I to speak of this to thee? It is bad enough that thou knowest it now."

"And what did the father tell you?" inquired Agnese.

"He told me to try and speed our wedding as much as might be, and in the meantime to remain within doors, praying earnestly to the Lord and hoping that, not seeing me, the man would cease thinking of me. It was then I forced myself," she said, turning again towards Renzo, but without raising her eyes to his face; and blushing all over—"it was then that I laid aside a maid's reserve and begged thee to try and hasten matters and not wait for the day we had set. God knows what thou thoughtest of me! But I acted for the best and in obedience to advice, and I thought surely— And this morning how little I imagined . . . . ." Here her words were drowned in a flood of tears.

"Hah! the scoundrel, the reprobate, the cutthroat!" cried out Renzo, striding up and down the room and clutching now and then the hilt of his dagger.

"Heavens above, what a pass to come to!" exclaimed Agnese.

The youth halted suddenly before Lucia, watching her tears with a tenderness tempered both with pity and with rage, and said: "This is that cutthroat's last piece of work!"

"Ah, no, Renzo, in Heaven's name!" cried Lucia. "No, no, in Heaven's name! The Lord will be mindful of us, though poor; but if we do wrong, how can we expect His help?"

"No, no, in Heaven's name!" echoed Agnese.

"Renzo," said Lucia, with a quieter air of hopefulness and determination, "you have your craft and I am able to work; let us go afar off where that man will never hear of us."

"Ah, Lucia! and what would we do then? We are not yet husband and wife, and could we get a testimonial from the pastor that we are free to marry, seeing the kind of man he is? If we were wed, oh, then . . . . ."

Lucia began again to weep, and all three remained silent, their festal attire making a sad contrast to the dejection of their manner.

"Hark ye, children; listen to me," said Agnese after a moment. "I came into the world before you, and I know a little something about it. There is no need to be so downhearted; the devil is never so black as he is painted. The skein seemeth more tangled to our innocent wits than it really is, because we know not where to start unravelling it; but betimes a word of advice, a little hint from a man with the learning— I know very well what I would say. Be said by me, Renzo. Hie thee to Lecco. Seek the house of Doctor Azzecca-Garbugli and tell him—— But, for Heaven's sake, don't address him by that name; it is a nickname. You must call him 'Worshipful Doctor ——' Whatever is his name? La, la, la! His right name I do not know, but this is what everybody calleth him. No matter. Hunt for a doctor of the law who is a tall, gaunt man with hairy hands, a red nose, and a raspberry-colored birthmark on his cheek."

"I know him by sight," said Renzo.

"Good," continued Agnese. "Now there is a man in a million for you. I have seen more than one at their wits' end—tangled up like a chick in hemp—who after having their heads together for a quarter of an hour with Doctor Azzecca-Garbugli (beware

of addressing him so, though) came away, I tell you, laughing. Take those four capons there (the innocent creatures! I was going to wring their necks for Sunday's feast) and bring them to him; because lawyers like not empty-handed visitors. Tell him the whole hap, and see if he will not give you such an answer in the twinkling of an eye as we would cudgel our brain for in vain for a twelve month."

Renzo cheerfully fell in with the plan; Lucia approved, and Agnese, proud of being its author, drew out the unlucky fowls one by one from their coop, and, bunching their legs together like the stems of a bouquet, she bound them and handed them over to Renzo. Renzo, after exchanging a few words of encouragement, went off through the garden so as to avoid the children, who would be sure to run after him, crying: "The bridegroom, the bridegroom." Thus, cutting across the fields, or "places," as they are locally designated, he fared forth along the less-traveled roads, ruminating frenziedly over his misfortune and pondering his speech for Doctor Azzecca-Garbugli. I leave the reader to imagine what kind of a journey it must have been for the poor animals who found themselves, with their feet tied together and their heads towards the ground, in the hands of a man agitated by so many strong emotions and gesticulating furiously to keep pace with the torrent of his thoughts. Now he strikes out from him in anger, now he throws up his hands in despair, and again he brandishes his clenched fist in defiance, while their dangling heads knock one against another and they are shaken to within an inch of their lives. Meanwhile they contrive to peck at each other, as often befalls among companions in misfortune.

Once he had reached the village, he inquired about the lawyer's dwelling place. He was directed where to go, and made for it at once. At the threshold he was seized with that timidity which the illiterate poor experience in presence of the gentle and the learned, and the speech he had prepared left him; but he glanced at the capons and took heart of grace. Entering the kitchen, he asked the wench if he might speak with his worship, the lawyer. She clapped her eye on the fowls, and, as if such gifts

were usual, she took hold of them, though Renzo kept drawing back, desirous that the lawyer should see them and know there was a fee in the case. The latter arrived on the scene himself just as the woman was saying: "Give them here to me and go in." Renzo made a low bow. The lawyer received him graciously, saying: "Come along, my son," and ushered him into his study. It was a large room, with three of its sides taken up by portraits of the twelve Cæsars. The remaining wall was hidden by shelves bearing rows of old, dust-laden books. In the centre was a table cluttered up with briefs, averments, appeals, edicts and such gear, and ranged about the room were three or four small chairs and one large leather-covered armchair with a square high back surmounted by two ornamental scrolls carved out of wood. In several places the bosses which secured the leather had fallen out long ago, thus leaving the corners free to curl up here and there. The lawyer was in house costume, enveloped in a worn-out gown that many years before had lent dignity to him in the rostrum on the red-letter days when he went to Milan on some important case. He closed the door and raised the youth's heart with the words: "Tell me your trouble, my son."

"I would fain tell thee somewhat in confidence."

"I am at your service," replied the man of the law, seating himself in the armchair. "Proceed." Renzo, standing in front of the table and twirling his hat round his finger, started anew: "I would fain learn from your worship, who is learned——"

"Tell me the facts of the case as they are," interrupted the lawyer.

"You must excuse me. We poor peasants are clumsy of speech. I would, therefore, fain learn——"

"Bless your hearts, you are all alike. Instead of telling the facts, you want to ask questions, because you have your minds already made up."

"I crave your worship's pardon. I would fain learn if the law can be had on a man who by threats deterreth a priest from performing a marriage."

"I see," said the lawyer to himself, though in truth he had not

seen at all. He pulled a serious face, but a seriousness that was qualified by sympathy and solicitude. He puckered his lips, at the same time emitting an inarticulate sound indicative of a sentiment which he proceeded to express more clearly in his opening words: "A serious matter, my son; an actionable matter. You have done well to come to me. The law is clear on the point—provides for it in a hundred edicts and—yes, in one of last year's from the present lord governor. You can see it and handle it yourself this minute."

So saying, he arose from his chair and started delving among the chaos of papers as if he were mixing meal.

"Where has it got to? Come out of there, come out of there. So many things that a man must have ready at hand! But it must surely be here, 'tis a proclamation of such importance. Ah! see, here it is." He took it up and unrolled it, then he glanced at the date, and, looking still more serious, exclaimed: "The fifteenth of October, 1627. To be sure; last year's. A brand-new enactment! They are the kind that strike terror. Can you read, my son?"

"A little, your worship."

"Good; follow me with your eye, and you will see for yourself."

Holding the parchment spread out before him, he began to read, hurrying rapidly over some passages and emphasizing others impressively according to the needs of the case:

"Whereas a decree published by order of His Lordship, the Duke of Feria, on the fourteenth day of December of the year 1620 and confirmed by His Illustrious Excellency, the noble Gonzalo Fernandez de Cordova, etc., provided extraordinary and rigorous penalties against acts of oppression, extortion and tyranny which certain persons have the audacity to commit against his majesty's devoted vassals, notwithstanding the which the frequency and malignity, etc., of these crimes have increased to such a point that his excellency feels compelled, etc. It has therefore been resolved by him, the senate and committee concurring, etc., to publish these presents.

"And, proceeding first to acts of tyranny, whereas it is shown by experience that many in the country places no less than in the

cities—d'ye see?—*of this state do tyrannize over the defenceless by various forms of duress and extortion, to the end that contracts of lease and sale are made by force—etc.* That's not us. Ah! here we are; listen: *that marriages are obstructed or compulsorily performed.* Eh?"

"It's my own case," quoth Renzo.

"Hear, hear; that is not all. And then for the penalty: *That a man should be compelled to act as witness or prevented from doing so; that a man be forced to leave his home, etc.; that this man should pay a certain debt; that another should not molest his debtor; that a miller be compelled to go to his mill.* That is all beside the point. Ah! here you are: *That priests refuse to fulfil their office or turn it to improper uses.* What?

"The edict might have been made just for me."

"Might it not, eh? But listen, listen: *And similar acts of violence, whether the transgressor be a seignior, noble, yeoman, villain or churl.* Not a loophole; they are all down. A regular valley of Jehosaphat! Listen now to the penalties:

"For all these and similar crimes, although statutory offences, yet, more severe sanctions being called for, his excellency by these presents, without derogating, etc., directs and commands that all the judiciaries of this state proceed against culprits obnoxious under any of the above counts or guilty of similar crimes, by fines and imprisonment, with further power to deport, condemn to the galleys, and even to death (a merry trifle that) *at the discretion of his excellency or of the senate, according to the quality of the crimes, persons and circumstances, all this being subject neither to revocation nor mitigation, etc.* A whole arsenal, eh? And see the signatures here: *Gonzalo Fernandez de Cordova;* and lower down, *Platonus,* and again, *Vidit Ferrer.* Not a link missing."

While the lawyer was reading, Renzo followed with his eye, seeking to extract the meaning and to get a good look at the magic words that were to be his salvation. The lawyer wondered at seeing his new client more in thought than fear. "Can he be of the profession?" he thought to himself. "Ah, ha!" he then said. "You have had your tuft cut off. 'Twas only pru-

dence; still, with me handling your interests, there was no need of it. The case is serious, but you do not know what I am equal to in a pinch."

To understand this sally of the lawyer's, one should know, or bear in mind, that professional bravos and all such characters of the period were wont to wear a long lock of hair, which they let fall over their face like a visor in the act of committing an assault in those cases where disguise was necessary and where the undertaking called at once for strength and prudence. The laws were not silent in regard to such a fashion.

His Excellency (the Marquis of la Hynojosa) directs that a fine of three hundred scudi be imposed on any and all found wearing their hair of such a length as to reach to their eyebrows, exclusively, or a lock of the same, whether it hangs forward or behind the ear; and, in case of inability to pay, that they be sent to the galleys for three years for the first offence, and, for the second, in addition to the above, that the pecuniary and corporal punishment be augmented at the discretion of his excellency.

It is permitted, however, for reasons of baldness or other reasonable causes of scars or wounds and in the interests of health and personal appearance, to wear the hair of sufficient length to cover such defects, and no more, on pain of incurring the penalties provided for other cases of false pretence.

"Barbers are also hereby directed, under penalty of one hundred scudi or three applications of the rack publicly administered and further corporal inflictions, to beware, when cutting hair, of leaving locks, tufts or tresses of any kind, or a longer growth of hair than is customary, either over the forehead or temples or behind the ears, but to shear off a uniform length as above set forth, except in cases of baldness, or other defects, as hereinbefore described.

The tuft was therefore a defensive asset and distinguishing mark of ruffians and blacklegs, who were for this reason commonly called tuft-boys. The term, in a milder sense, survives as a vestige in our dialect, and there is, perhaps, not one of my Milanese readers but will remember to have heard either parents

or teacher, household friend or servant, say of him in his childhood that he was a little tuft-boy.

"In sooth, on the word of a poor young fellow," replied Renzo, "I have never worn a tuft my whole life long."

"I'll never move a hand," replied the lawyer, shaking his head and smiling skeptically, but somewhat impatient. "If you put not trust in me, I will ne'er move a hand. He who keepeth the truth from his counsel shall tell it to the judge. You are to deal plainly with your advocate; 'tis for him to confuse matters. If you want my help, you must tell me all from A to Z, as open-heartedly, candidly, as you would to the priest in confession. I must have the name of your principal. Naturally he will be a person of consequence. In that case I go to pay him my respects. I do not say to him, mind, that you have told me about his employing you; trust me for that. I say that I come to recommend a poor misspoken youth to his protection. Then, together, we shall concert a way to terminate the affair commendably. In getting himself out, you see, he will get you out of it, too. But if the escapade be all your own doing, go to, I'll not draw back; I've saved others in worse case. I engage herewith to clear you—if so be the fault is not against a person of consequence, of course—with a little outlay, of course. I must know who the plaintiff is, as he is called. Then it will appear, according to the station, quality and temper of our man, whether it consisteth best with our interests to disarm him by seeking a patron or to turn the tables on him and get him in the toils himself; because with laws, so one knoweth how to manipulate them, no one is guilty and no one is innocent. As to the priest, if he has discretion, he will hold his place; if he prove balky, that can be cured, too. There is a way out of every broil; but it craves brains. Your case is serious—serious, I tell you—serious. The decree is clearly worded, and, if the matter were to be decided on its merits before the law, I tell you here between us two, that you would pay dearly for it. I am speaking to you as a friend. Getting into trouble is expensive. If you would get off with whole skin, stint not your purse or your confidence— Trust in one

who would befriend you— Be obedient— Follow out every suggestion."

While the lawyer was spinning out phrases at such length, Renzo remained watching him with a rapt expression like some yokel at a fair looking at a mountebank cram his mouth full of raw flax and then draw forth yard after yard of ribbon, as if there were to be no end. When at length he perceived the learned man's drift and the misapprehension he was under, he broke off the ribbon, leaving the rest unspun, with: "Oh, your worship, that's not my meaning; it's the other way round. I have made no threats to anyone; it's not my way. Ask any man of my parish, and he'll tell you that I have never seen the inside of a court-room. It's I that have been put upon, and I came to find out how I am to get redress. And mightily pleased I am to have seen the decree."

"The devil take you!" exclaimed the lawyer, his eyes starting from their sockets. "What kind of a mare's nest is this? Assuredly you are all alike. Can't you learn to talk plainly?"

"Under your favor, you did not give me time. Now I'll tell you the story just as it is. You should know, then, that I was to have this day married" (here Renzo's voice broke)—"I was to have married a lass that I have been wooing since the summer. We had fixed on today with the parish priest, and all arrangements had been made, when lo! he begins to allege this, that and the other— But, not to bore you, I brought him to book, as I should, and he hath confessed that he was forbidden under pain of his life to perform the marriage. That piratical Don Rodrigo——"

"Away with you!" suddenly broke in the lawyer, making a wry face. "Away with you! Would you have me bother my head about such old wives' tales? Keep such talk for your likes, who don't weigh their words, and spare a self-respecting man who knows their value. Be off! be off! you don't know what you are talking about. I'll not meddle with boys' affairs. I'll not listen to such vaporings."

"Upon my oath——"

"Be off, I say. What do your oaths mean to me? It's no

affair of mine; I wash my hands of it." And he went on washing them, as it were, in reality. "Mend your speech and learn not to intrude on gentlemen after this fashion."

"But hear me out," continued Renzo meanwhile.

The lawyer, scolding incessantly, pushed Renzo towards the door, and, opening it when he had him at the threshold, he called to the kitchen-wench, saying: "Give back to this man that which he brought. I'll have nothing from him—nothing at all."

The good woman had never in all her time in that house executed a like order, but it was issued with such authority that she obeyed unhesitatingly. Taking the fowls, she gave them to Renzo with a glance of contemptuous pity as who should say: A fine mess you must have made of it. Renzo wished to remonstrate, but the lawyer remained obdurate, and the luckless wight, more dumbfounded and angry than ever, had to take back the rejected victims and return to tell the women-folk about the famous success of his mission.

The women in his absence, after sadly exchanging their gala attire for work-a-day clothes, started again discussing plans amid the sobbing of Lucia and Agnese's sighs. After the latter had spoken of the great results to be expected from the lawyer's advice, Lucia said that help should be sought in every quarter; that Father Cristoforo was a man not only to give advice but to put his shoulder to the wheel when it was a question of relieving poor creatures; and that it would be a happy thought to let him know this hap. "To be sure," quoth Agnese; and together they cast about for some means to do so, because they felt their courage unequal that day to making the trip to the monastery, about two miles away. And certainly no man with judgment would have counselled such a course. But whilst they were weighing alternatives, a rap came at the door, accompanied by a subdued but distinct "Deo Gratias." Lucia, divining who it might be, went to draw the latch. A lay brother-questor, with a scrip flung across his left shoulder and grasped in both hands before his breast, came forward bowing familiarly.

"Oh, Fra Galdino!" said the two women.

"The Lord be with you," quoth the brother. "I am come a-begging for walnuts."

"Go fetch the fathers' walnuts," said Agnese. Lucia arose and started for the other room, but before entering she slipped behind Fra Galdino, who remained standing in the same place, and placing the tip of her finger on her lips, she gave her mother a look that sued for secrecy in the language of loving entreaty, but, at the same time, of authority.

The brother-questor, peering at Agnese from the distance which he kept, said: "And the wedding that was to have been today? I noticed the village all agog, as if there was something in the wind. What hath occurred?"

"His reverence is ill, and it is put off," Agnese quickly replied. Had it not been for Lucia's warning gesture, the reply would probably have been different. "And how are the alms?" she added, to change the subject.

"Indifferent, my good woman—very indifferent. This is the sum of them." So saying, he unslung the scrip and dangled it lightly before him. "This is the sum of them; and, to come by this great foison, I had to knock at ten doors."

"But crops are poor, Fra Galdino; and, when we must make shift to keep the bread in our mouths, we cannot be open-handed abroad."

"And what is the way to bring back plenty, my good woman? Almsgiving. Do you know the miracle of the walnuts that happened years ago in our monastery of Romagna?"

"No, in sooth. What's the story?"

"Oh, well, the tale runneth thus. In that convent lived a monk who was a holy man by name of Father Macario. Passing along the road of a winter's day by the field of one of our benefactors, likewise a God-fearing man, Father Macario saw the owner standing near a great walnut-tree, and four laborers with hoes aloft beginning to dig the earth away from the roots. 'What are you doing to that poor old tree?' asked Father Macario. 'A plague of it, father; for years and years it hath borne no nuts, and now I am going to make firewood of it.' 'Let it stand,' quoth the monk, 'and rest assured that this year it will

bear more nuts than leaves.' Our benefactor, knowing the kind of man the speaker was, at once ordered the workmen to cover up the roots again, and, calling to the father, who was continuing on his way: 'Father Macario,' he said, 'the monastery shall have the half of the yield.' The rumor of the prophecy went abroad and every one came to look at the walnut-tree. For, in fact, the next spring there were blossoms by the bushels and, in due time, bushels of nuts. The good man had not the satisfaction to shake down his harvest, for by autumn he had gone to receive the guerdon of his charity. But here the wonder groweth, as you will see.

"The worthy man left behind him a son cast in a very different mould. Now, then, at harvest-time the brother-questor goes to claim the monastery's share, but the young heir feigned surprise and had the hardihood to say that he had never heard it told of Capuchins that they could produce walnuts. Now what chanced, d'ye think? One day (mark this!) the rake had invited some friends of his own stripe to dinner, and, while the wine was flowing, he told them the story about the walnuts and had his laugh at the friars. The blades had a fancy to go and see the unconscionable windfall of walnuts, and he led them up to the granary loft. Now mark what ensues! He opened the door and went to the corner in which they were heaped, and with the word 'Look!' on his lips, he looked himself, and saw—what? A fine heap of walnut leaves. Was not this a lesson? And instead of suffering any loss, the monastery was the gainer by it; for, after this prodigy, there was such an epidemic of walnut-giving that a benefactor, out of pity for the poor brother-questor, made the monastery the present of an ass to help carry the walnuts home. And the oil was so plentiful that all the poor came and received according to their needs, because we are like the sea, getting from all sides and feeding every stream again in return."

At this point Lucia appeared with her apron held out at arms' length and so loaded down with walnuts that she staggered under the weight of them. While Fra Galdino was lifting his scrip from his shoulders to the floor and untying its mouth to receive this

charitable abundance, the mother gave Lucia an austere look of astonishment for her lavishness; but Lucia signified by a glance that she had had good reasons. Fra Galdino broke forth into words of praise and blessing for herself and assurances of gratitude and unforgetfulness on the part of his brethren, and, taking up his scrip again, was starting away. Lucia called him back, saying: "I would a favor of you. I would you would tell Father Cristoforo that I have great need to speak with him and I beg him of his charity to pay a visit very, very soon to our humble cot, because we cannot go to the church."

"Is that all? Father Cristoforo will know of your wish within the hour."

"I depend on you."

"Have no misgivings." And, so saying, he went off somewhat more stooped and better contented than he had come.

Let no one think, at seeing a poor girl send with such confidence for Father Cristoforo, and the brother-questor undertake her commission without surprise and without demur, that Father Cristoforo was an inconsequential friar or a mere common hack. On the contrary, he was a man of great influence among his brethren and in the country round about; but, so it was, nothing was too abject for the Capuchin and nothing too exalted. Serving the lowly and waited on by the powerful, equally at home and equally humble of demeanor in a palace or in a hut, sometimes a subject for joking and an adviser without whom nothing was decided upon within the limits of the same household, begging alms everywhere and disbursing them with an open hand at the monastery—there was no situation to which a Capuchin was not accustomed. In his walks through town he was just as apt to fall in with a prince who would reverently kiss the end of his cord as he was to meet a crowd of urchins who, under pretence of quarreling among themselves, would defile his beard with mud. The name of friar was in those days a term of the greatest respect and of the bitterest contempt; and Capuchins, perhaps more than any other order, elicited these extremes of sentiment and experienced the corresponding extremes of treatment, because, owning nothing, wearing a garb

more than ever at variance with the fashion, and making more open profession of humility, they exposed themselves more directly to the veneration and disdain which such things excite in different natures and according to the principles of different men.

"All those walnuts!" exclaimed Agnese, when Fra Galdino had left; "in such a year as this!"

"Forgive me, mamma," replied Lucia; "but had we given like the rest, there is no telling how long Fra Galdino would have had to tramp before his scrip was full, or when he would have got back to the monastery. And, what with gossiping and listening to gossip, the Lord knoweth how much remembrance he would have——"

" 'Twas well thought on. And besides, 'tis all charity and will breed blessings," said Agnese, who was, with all her failings, as good as gold and would have been willing to go through fire and water, as they say, for this only child that was all her pride.

At this juncture Renzo arrived, resentment and mortification on his brow. Entering the room, he flung the capons on a table; and this was the end of that day's vicissitudes for them.

"Precious advice you gave me!" said he to Agnese. "A fine gentleman and a great friend of the poor, you sent me to!" Then he recounted his interview with the doctor of the law. The good woman, dumbfounded at such ill success, would fain have proved that the advice was good and that Renzo could not have carried things off as he should; but Lucia cut short their diatribe with the announcement that she had found one who, she hoped, would be a better help. Renzo again welcomed the hope, as the way is with those in misfortune or difficulties. "But," quoth he, "if the father can think of no resort, fair or foul, I'll think of one myself."

The women urged peace, patience, prudence. "Tomorrow," said Lucia, "Father Cristoforo will be sure to come, and you'll see that he will find a remedy such as would never enter the heads of people like ourselves."

"I hope he will," said Renzo; "but in any case, our wrongs

shall be righted, by my own hand or by some other's. This is a just world after all."

The whole day had now been spent in painful conferences and the comings and goings we have recorded, and darkness was falling apace.

"Good night, Renzo," said Lucia sadly to her lover, who could not bring himself to depart.

"Good night," replied Renzo, sadder still.

"Some saint will come to our help," rejoined Lucia. "Be prudent and resigned."

The mother added other admonitions of the same sort, and the bridegroom went away with his heart in a tumult, repeating over and over these curious words: "This is a just world after all." So true is it that a man overwrought by grief no longer knows what he says.

Chapter IV

The sun was not yet fully risen above the horizon when Father Cristoforo left the monastery at Pescarenico on his way up to the cottage where he was expected. Pescarenico is a little village on the left bank of the Adda—or the lake, as I should say—a short distance away from the bridge. It consists of a small group of houses, tenanted mostly by fishermen and garnished at intervals by seines and nets stretched out to dry. The monastery (its walls still stand) was situated outside, facing the entrance to the village, with the road from Lecco to Bergamo running between. The sky was cloudless; and, as the sun rose higher and higher behind the mountains, their shadows could be seen creeping down from the summits opposite, until all their slopes and the valleys beneath were in a flood of light. An autumn breeze was stripping the mulberries of their sere and yellow leaves and wafting them to the ground near by. In the vineyards to the right and left the brilliant tints of the grapes' foliage still gleamed in long festoons, and the new-made furrows stood out in vivid brown against the background of stubble glistening with dew. It was a gladdening scene, but sicklied o'er with the shadow of sadness cast by each human figure that appeared. Haggard, half-naked beggars, grown old in the profession or driven by recent necessity to the highway, passed along every now and then. They went by Father Cristoforo in silence, looking up at him piteously and (though they had nothing to expect from him, being a Capuchin who never touched money) making him a grateful reverence, in acknowledgment of the alms they had received or were going to solicit at the monastery.

The laborers scattered through the fields offered a more pathetic spectacle still. Some were occupied in sowing their seed, with a sparing hand and grudgingly, like a player venturing something too precious to lose. Others were painfully plying

their spades, turning the clod without any of the wonted joy of toil. A little wizen girl, leading an emaciated cow by the tether-rope, looked ahead of the animal as it grazed and stooped to appropriate for the family's needs a stray root, the use of which hunger had taught men to know. Such sights added at every step to the gloom of the friar, whose heart boded some tragic news as he walked along.

But why is he so concerned about Lucia? And why has he bestirred himself at her first summons as dutifully as it were a call from the father-provincial? And who is this Father Cristoforo?—All, questions that must be answered.

Father Cristoforo was a man closer to sixty than to fifty years. His head, close shaven except for the fringe of hair that encircled it like a crown, after the Capuchin fashion, was thrown back from time to time with a movement which betrayed indefinably a haughty, restless spirit, and was humbly lowered the same instant with the first access of reflection. His long white beard, hiding as it did the chin and cheeks, brought out into bolder relief the strong lines of the upper part of his countenance, which had borrowed dignity, rather than lost in expressiveness, from long habits of abstinence. His deep-seated eyes were generally bent on the ground, but occasionally they flashed into a sudden blaze of animation; like a pair of mettlesome steeds led by the hand of a groom whose mastery they have learned by experience not to dispute, which does not prevent them from prancing and curveting now and then at the cost of a good twinge of the bit.

It had not been always thus with Father Cristoforo, nor had Cristoforo always been his name. He had been christened Lodovico. He was the son of a merchant of —— (these blanks all come from my anonymous authority's circumspection), who, finding himself in his latter years with an only son and a great abundance of this world's goods, had retired from business and given himself up to the life of a gentleman.

In his new-found leisure there began to creep over him a great shame of all the time he had spent in doing something useful in the world. Obsessed by this sentiment, he tried in

every way to consign the fact of his having been a merchant to oblivion, and he would fain have become oblivious of it himself. But the mercer-shop and its bales of cloth, the ledger and yard-stick, haunted his memory, as Banquo's ghost haunted Macbeth, even amid the glamor of the banquet-hall and the smiles of his parasites. And who can describe the care which these poor souls had to exercise to eschew any word that might seem to allude to their host's former pursuits? One day (to quote a single instance) towards the fag-end of the meal, when mirth was running highest and speech was most unconfined, and no one could have said which had the more joy of hospitality, the host in dispensing it or his guests in partaking of it, he was bantering, in his patronizing way, one of the company who was a prince of trenchermen. The latter, to fall in with the jest and without the least shadow of malice, rather with the naïveté of a child, replied: "Umph! I can be as deaf, on occasion, as any shopkeeper that ever chose between his purse and his pride." The sound of his own words froze his blood. He looked up sheepishly into the face of the host—it had become over-clouded. Both of them would have wished to resume their gaiety, but it was impossible. The other guests sought to save the situation, each trying to think of some sally, but thinking, they remained silent, and with their silence the awkwardness increased. Each avoided the others' eyes; each knew what was in the others' mind and the efforts they were making at dissimulation. Joy fled for that day, and the tactless, or, to be just, the luckless, satellite was invited no more. Thus Lodovico's father passed his last years, with his mind never at peace, in constant dread of humiliation and without ever reflecting that selling is no more deserving of ridicule than buying, and that for years he had publicly exercised that profession which now appeared so shameful without any sense of remorse. He educated his son like a nobleman, according to the circumstances of the times and in the measure which law and custom permitted, giving him instructors in polite letters and in the arts of chivalry, and then he died, leaving him wealthy and still young.

Lodovico had contracted the habits of a nobleman, and the

sycophants among whom he had grown up had accustomed him to being treated with deference. But, when he wished to mingle with the aristocracy of the town, he found a very different attitude from that to which he was used, and he perceived that, to be of their number, as he would have wished, there was need to pass through a new kind of novitiate, that is, patience and submission, always to take a back seat and to suffer snubs in silence. A life of this kind agreed neither with Lodovico's education nor with his character, and he quit it in disgust. But he missed the society of men whom he felt to be his proper companions, if only they treated him less cavalierly. Beset by this twofold sentiment of attraction and antipathy, unable to meet them on familiar terms and yet wishing to be classed with them in some way, he set out to vie with them in style and splendor, thus openly inviting enmity, jealousy and ridicule. His disposition, which was at the same time honorable and impulsive, soon exposed him to clashes of a more serious order. He had a genuine and instinctive horror of violence and injustice, which was rendered more acute in him by the rank of those who daily practiced it, constituting as they did that same class against whom he entertained a grudge. To assuage, or to gratify, all these feelings at once, he gladly took the part of the weak and oppressed; he made it his glory to balk the licentious power of the great; he would interpose in one feud and thus precipitate another; so that, little by little, he set up for a champion of the persecuted and an avenger of wrongs. His task was arduous, and there is no need to ask whether poor Lodovico had his full share of either enemies, employment or worry. Besides the war without, he was continually torn by conflict within; because, to champion a cause successfully (not to speak of those in which he failed), he in his turn had to resort to strategy and force, which his conscience refused to approve. He was obliged to surround himself with a good number of bravos, and, as well for his own safety as for superior efficiency, he had to choose the greatest daredevils, which is to say, the worst scoundrels of their class, and to live among rogues for the sake of justice. So that more than once, out of discouragement after some failure or uneasi-

ness for some impending danger, weary of being continually on guard, disgusted with his society, solicitous about the future and his means, which were being exhausted day by day in swagger and philanthropy, the thought had flitted through his mind of becoming a friar, that being the commonest way out of embarrassments at the time. But what might have remained a mere notion all his life became a resolution through an adventure which was more serious than any which had yet befallen him.

He was one day passing along one of the streets of his own city, followed by two bravos and accompanied by a certain Cristoforo, who had formerly been a clerk in his father's store, and, when this was closed, had been made steward of his household. He was a man of about fifty years and from youth up had been devoted to Lodovico, whom he had known from the cradle and who, between salary and perquisites, afforded him the wherewithal not only to live but to maintain and raise a large family. Lodovico descried afar off a certain noble, notorious for his arrogance and brigandage, with whom he had never spoken in all his life, but who hated him cordially and who was hated just as cordially in return—it being one of our great advantages in this world that we can be enemies without knowing one another. The nobleman, with his retinue of four bravos, came stalking proudly on, his head in the air and a studied look of haughtiness and disdain on his countenance. Both of them walked next to the wall; but Lodovico (note this well!) grazed it with his right side, and this, according to a received custom, gave him the privilege (blessed privileges! they are lugged into everything) of keeping to the inside against no matter whom—a point on which much stress was then laid. The other claimed, on the contrary, that this privilege belonged to him in view of his rank, and that it was for Lodovico to turn out—and this by virtue of another custom. Thus, as happens in many other matters, there were two conflicting customs without its having ever been decided which should prevail, and war was the upshot whenever one hard-headed claimant fell in with another whose head was equally hard. The two approached each other, crawling against the wall like two animated figures in bas-relief.

When they were come face to face, the noble, eyeing Lodovico with a supercilious frown, said in a haughty tone of voice, "Make way."

"Make way, thou," answered Lodovico. "I have the right of way."

"With thy likes it is always mine."

"Ay, if the arrogance of thy likes were a law to mine."

The bravos on the one side and on the other stood still, each behind his own patron, glowering at one another, with their hands on their swords ready for the fray. The spectators, who began to assemble, stood off at a distance to witness the proceeding, and their presence stimulated the punctiliousness of the contestants.

"Take the road, base pedlar, or I'll teach thee once for all what is due to gentlemen."

"Thou liest that I am base."

"Thou liest in calling me liar." (This was the prescribed rejoinder.) "And wert thou knight as I am, by my sword and my cape I would show thee thou liest."

"An excellent pretext for those whose craven hearts belie their brave words."

"Throw this churl into the gutter," said the noble, turning to his followers.

"We shall see," said Lodovico, stepping back and putting a hand to his sword.

"Insolent dog," cried the other, unsheathing his own, "I shall break this into bits once it hath been stained with thy base blood."

At this they set upon each other, the followers on either side rushing to the defence of their masters. It was an unequal contest, both by reason of the disparity of numbers and also because, while Lodovico was directing his efforts at parrying thrusts and disarming rather than killing his antagonist, the other was bent upon having nothing less than his enemy's life. Lodovico had already received a dagger-wound on his left arm from one of the bravos and a slit across the cheek, and the noble was pressing him hard with a view to despatching him. Cristo-

foro, seeing his master in imminent peril, fell upon their principal foe with his dagger. The latter, transferring his fury thereupon to his new assailant, ran him through with his sword. At the sight of this, Lodovico became frantic and buried his own weapon in the stomach of Cristoforo's slayer, so that the two of them fell expiring to the ground at almost the same instant. The nobleman's attendants, seeing that it was all over with him, took to flight, much the worse of the encounter, and those of Lodovico, who were likewise sadly battered and disfigured, left with the field to themselves, turned and ran in the opposite direction, so as not to be enveloped by the crowd that was already gathering. Lodovico found himself alone with the two woeful companions at his feet in the midst of a press of people.

"What is the outcome of it?"—"One dead."—"No, two."—"He hath let daylight through this fellow."—"Who was killed?"—"That scoundrelly noble."—"Oh, Mother of God, what a shambles!"—"Seek, and you shall find."—"The last score counts everything."—"He's come to the end of his rope."—"What a sword-thrust."—"'Twill be a serious business."—"Look at that poor fellow, too! Heavens! what a sight!"—"Save him, save him."—"He'll pay dearly, also."—"See how he's served! bleeding all over."—"Fly, fly. Don't let them take you."

These last words, which, more than any others, were raised above the din of the mob, expressed the consensus of opinion, and on the heels of advice followed action. The occurrence had taken place hard by a Capuchin church, which, as every one knows, was a sanctuary inaccessible to the police and to that whole array of persons and things which went by the name of the law. Thither was the wounded duellist led, or rather, carried by the crowd and received almost unconscious by the friars from the hands of the people, who recommended him to their hospitality with the words: "He is a worthy man that hath made a proud bully food for worms. 'Twas done in self-defence. He was forced into it willy-nilly."

Lodovico had never up to that time shed human blood, and, though the taking of life was then so common that every one was familiarized with it by hearsay or by sight, still the sensation

of beholding one man lying dead by his hand and another slain on his account was a new and indescribable experience and awoke in him sentiments whose existence was a revelation. His enemy's fall to the ground, the sudden transformation of those features from vindictiveness and hatred to the helplessness and passive solemnity of death, was a sight that changed the soul of the slayer on the instant. He had been dragged into the monastery hardly knowing where he was and what was going on, and on recovering consciousness he found himself in bed in the infirmary attended by the surgeon of the community (ordinarily the Capuchins had one such in each convent), who was stanching and swathing the two wounds which he had received in the engagement. One of the fathers, whose special charge was to assist the dying, and who frequently had to perform his ministrations on the street, was hurriedly called to the scene of the conflict. He returned in a few minutes, and, entering the infirmary, he drew near the bed where Lodovico lay and said: "You can console yourself that, at least, he died a good death. He commissioned me to ask pardon of you and give you his." These words brought poor Lodovico completely to his senses and made him feel more vividly and more poignantly the different emotions which had been surging confusedly through his brain—sorrow for his friend, consternation and remorse for the hasty stroke into which he had been betrayed and, at the same time, compassionate anguish for the man he had slain. "And the other?" he asked anxiously of the friar.

"He had expired when I arrived."

Meanwhile the monastery's environs and approaches were swarming with the curious, until the police, arriving on the scene, dispersed the mob and took up their post at a respectful distance from the doors, yet close enough that no one could pass out unobserved. A brother of the deceased, two of his cousins and an aged uncle, all armed from head to foot and accompanied by a great force of bravos, likewise came and set themselves to patrolling the neighborhood with many menacing looks and hostile demonstrations directed against the idle spectators on

whose faces was plainly written the "Served him right" which their lips dared not utter.

Scarcely had time to collect his thoughts elapsed when Lodovico called a confessor and begged him to seek out Cristoforo's widow and ask forgiveness in his name for having been the occasion, though most involuntarily, of her bereavement, and, at the same time, to assure her that he assumed responsibility for her family. Turning his thoughts next to himself, he felt the old fitful inclination to become a monk springing up with more clearness and earnestness than ever. It seemed to him that God Himself had set his feet upon that path and given him a token of His will in guiding him to a monastery under such circumstances; and his choice was made. He summoned the father-guardian and made known his desire. For reply he was told to beware of sudden resolutions, but that, if he persevered, he would not be refused. Then, calling in a notary, he dictated a deed of gift of all that remained to him (which constituted, however, a very fair patrimony) to Cristoforo's family, settling a certain sum on the widow, as if he were matching a bride's dowry, and the rest to the eight children that Cristoforo had left behind him.

Lodovico's determination came opportunely for his hosts, who found themselves in a painful dilemma on his account. To turn him out and thus expose him to the law—that is, to the vengeance of his enemies—was a course which might not even be considered. It would have been equivalent to renouncing their own privileges, discrediting the monastery with the people, drawing down the censure of all the Capuchins in Christendom for having betrayed their common rights and pitting against them all the ecclesiastical authorities, who deemed themselves the guardian of these rights. On the other hand, the family of the deceased, who were extremely powerful themselves and formidably connected, were bent upon retaliation and were proclaiming as an enemy any one who attempted to balk their efforts. History does not say that they grieved overmuch for their departed relative, nor even that a single tear was shed for him in the whole

clan; it only says that they were all rabidly eager to have his slayer in their clutches, dead or alive.

Now, by taking the habit, he smoothed away all difficulties. He gave them ample satisfaction, in a way; he underwent self-imposed penance and, by implication, he admitted being in the wrong. In a word, he withdrew entirely from the argument—it was the case of an enemy who laid down his arms. They could also, if they liked, believe and brag that he had taken the cowl in desperation, terror-stricken by their resentment. In any event, to reduce a man to the extreme of resigning his possessions, of shaving his poll and going barefoot, of sleeping on straw and living on alms, was a punishment that might well seem adequate even to the most vainglorious of rivals.

The father-guardian presented himself with unaffected humility before the brother of the deceased, and, after a thousand protestations of respect for his illustrious house and of willingness to oblige it whenever it was feasible, he spoke of Lodovico's repentance and resolution, politely intimating that his house might feel great satisfaction in it and, with still finer skill, suavely insinuating that, with their good-will or without it, the thing must be. The brother flew into a rage, which the Capuchin allowed to spend itself, saying from time to time: "Your grief is only too well founded." The nobleman gave it to be understood that his family could have found a way to retaliate in any case; and the Capuchin, whatever he may have thought, did not say him nay. He at length requested—laid down as a condition—that the slayer of his brother should depart without delay from the city. The guardian, who had already determined upon the same thing, said that it should be done, leaving the other free to be believe, if he liked, that it was an act of obedience. So the matter was settled. It satisfied the family, who came out of it with honor; it satisfied the monks, who saved a man's life and the privileges of their order without making enemies; it satisfied the amateurs of chivalry, who saw an affair of honor terminated creditably; it satisfied the people, who saw a well-liked man escape from trouble and, at the same time, were edified by a conversion; and, finally, it satisfied more than all

Lodovico, who was sorrowfully beginning a life of expiation and service wherein he might, not indeed repair, but atone for the harm he had done and assuage the pangs of his remorse. The suspicion that his step might be attributed to fear worried him for a brief moment, but he comforted himself straightway with the reflection that even this unjust judgment would be a chastisement and a means of expiation. Thus, at the age of thirty, he clothed himself in sackcloth; and, being obliged by custom to lay aside his own name and assume another, he chose one that would remind him every minute of that which he was to atone for—he took the name of Cristoforo.

Immediately after the ceremony of reception the father-guardian announced to him that he was to go to ——, sixty miles away, to make his novitiate, and that he would start on the morrow. The novice bowed low and asked for a favor. "Grant me permission, father," he said, "before quitting this town, where I have shed the blood of a fellow-man and am leaving behind me a family cruelly wronged, to wipe out the affront and testify my regret, at least, at not being able to repair the damage, by asking pardon of the victim's brother and plucking hatred, if so be that God bless my intention, from his heart." Such a step seemed to the guardian both good in itself and calculated to conciliate still more the family towards the monastery, and he betook himself forthwith to the brother to present Fra Cristoforo's request. At such an unexpected proposal the nobleman was seized with wonder and a fresh access of indignation, tempered somewhat, however, by gratification.

After a moment's thought, "Let him come tomorrow," he said specifying the hour. The father-guardian returned without delay to the novice with the coveted consent.

It occurred at once to the noble that the more noise and fuss there was made about the apology the more his prestige would grow with his family and with the people, and it would be a brilliant page, to use an elegant expression from the moderns, in the history of their house. He hurriedly notified all the relatives that their presence was sued for (as the phrase then ran) at high noon the following day to receive honorable amends for a

common injury. At the stipulated hour the palace was thronged with lords and ladies of all ages. Knights and nobles were treading on one another's heels, plumes waved, swords clanked, ruffs creaked starchily and richly orphreyed copes filled the air with their swishing and rustling. The antechambers, the courtyard and the street swarmed with servants and pages, with bravos and onlookers. On seeing all this circumstance and guessing its meaning, Fra Cristoforo felt a slight trepidation, but the next instant he said to himself, " 'Tis well. I slew him in public with enemies all around him. Like scandal, like expiation." Thus, with downcast eyes and his companion at his side, he passed the threshold and crossed the courtyard, making his way through a crowd who stared at him with impudent curiosity. He mounted the steps, and, hemmed in by another crowd, this time of nobles, who opened up a lane for him to pass, and followed by the eyes of all, he came into the presence of the master of the house. Surrounded by the nearest of kin, the latter stood in the middle of the hall with his chin in the air and averted gaze, clasping in his left hand the hilt of his sword and his right hand on his breast, clutching the lapel of his cloak.

At certain times there is in men's countenances and demeanors an expression of soul so transparent that every spectator in the crowd forms the same judgment about it. Fra Cristoforo's countenance and demeanor told the bystanders plainly that he had not turned monk nor sought this humiliation out of human respect, and this was the first step in conciliating them all towards him. When he perceived the offended person, he hastened his step, and kneeling at his feet and folding his arms on his breast, he bowed his shaven head and spoke thus: "I am the slayer of thy brother. God knows that I would fain restore him to thee at the price of my own life. But, powerless as I am to render thee aught else than these tardy, sterile regrets, I beseech thee for God's sake to accept them." Every eye was riveted upon the novice and the personage whom he addressed; every eye was strained to its utmost. As Fra Cristoforo ceased speaking, a murmur of respect and awe ran through the hall. The nobleman, standing in his attitude of lofty condescension and

repressed wrath, was disturbed by such words, and, bending towards the kneeling friar, "Arise," he said with a softened voice; "the offence—the occurrence truly—but the habit you bear—not your habit merely, but for yourself— Arise, father— My brother—I cannot deny—was a noble—was a man—of some mettle—of some heat. But everything happens as God decrees. Let us say no more— But, father, you must not remain in that posture." And taking hold of his arms, he raised him up. Fra Cristoforo, erect but with bowed head, replied: "I can, therefore, hope that thou hast granted me pardon? And if I obtain it from thee, who will withhold it? Oh! to hear that word from thy lips—pardon!"

"Pardon?" quoth the nobleman. "Thou hast now no need of it. Still, since thou desirest it, most certainly do I pardon thee from my heart; and all——"

"All! all!" cried the bystanders with one voice. The friar's face beamed with grateful joy, which did not, however, completely veil his deep and humble compunction for the harm which human absolution could not repair. The noble, melted by that visage and transported by the general emotion, fell upon the monk's neck and gave and received the kiss of peace.

"Bravo! well done!" broke from every part of the hall. Every one began to press about the friar. Meanwhile servants arrived, bearing copious refreshments. The nobleman approached Cristoforo, who showed that he wished to take his leave, and said: "Father, partake of something. Do not deny me this earnest of your friendship." And he began to serve him before anyone else. But he, drawing back with deprecatory cordiality, "Such things," said he, "are no longer for me. But it shall not be said that I refuse thy gifts. I am about to begin my journey; be pleased to have them bring me a loaf of bread, that I may say I have enjoyed thy charity, eaten of thy bread and received a pledge of thy forgiveness." The nobleman, deeply moved, gave orders that it should be done, and a serving-man in state attire directly appeared bearing a loaf in a silver dish, and presented it to the friar. The latter took it, and, giving thanks, placed it in his scrip. He then asked leave to retire; and, em-

bracing again the master of the house and all who were near enough to gain a moment's possession of him, he tore himself away with difficulty, only to renew the struggle in the antechambers to free himself of the servants and even of the bravos, who kissed the hem of his robe, his cord or his cowl. Thus he reached the street, carried in triumph, so to speak, and was accompanied by a throng of people to the city gate, where he set out on his long journey afoot towards the place of his novitiate.

The brother of the deceased and all the assembled kith and kin, who had been expecting that day to taste of pride's melancholy triumph, found their hearts overflowing, instead, with the serene joy of forgiveness and kindliness. The company remained yet some little time, discoursing, with unwonted gaiety and good humor, on topics for which no one had been prepared in going thither. In place of retaliations effected, of outrages vindicated and of causes successfully championed, their conversation ran on such themes as the novice and his virtues, the beauty of meekness and the sweetness of reconciliation. And that same bore, who would have related for the hundredth time how Count Muzio, his father, had managed on a celebrated occasion to bring the Marquis Stanislao, whom every one knows to have been a very Rodomante, to his knees, held forth instead on the marvelous penances and long-suffering of a certain Fra Simone, who had died many years before. When his guests had departed, the master of the house, still under strong emotion, looked back in wonderment over all he had heard and said. "The devil take that friar!" he muttered between his teeth (we must set down faithfully his own words)—"the devil take that friar! If he had remained kneeling there many more minutes, I would almost have apologized to him for his having killed my brother." Our history notes expressly that from that day forward this nobleman was a trifle less impulsive and a trifle more affable.

Father Cristoforo pursued his journey with such peace in his heart as he had not felt since that terrible day for which the rest of his life was to be an expiation. He observed the silence imposed on novices without being aware that he was silent,

absorbed as he was in thinking of the hardships, the privations and humiliations that his mistake would cost him. During the noon-hour halt at the home of a benefactor of the order he ate his loaf of grace with a kind of gluttonous pleasure, reserving a piece of it, however, and placing it in his scrip as a perpetual keepsake.

It is not our purpose to write the history of his monastic life. We shall only record that, while he cheerfully and sedulously fulfilled the ordinary functions of preaching and ministering to the dying, he never lost an opportunity of exercising two self-imposed offices, that of healing dissensions and that of championing the weak. These employments, unknown to himself, roused up in him the old Lodovico and rekindled a spark of that warlike spirit which humiliations and austerities had never been able entirely to extinguish. His speech was habitually meek and measured; but, when it was a case of persecuted truth or violated justice, the man's old impetuous character awoke, and, reenforced and chastened by an emphatic solemnity derived from the habit of preaching, clothed his language with a unique character. His countenance and his whole demeanor bespoke a long conflict between a fiery, high-strung nature and a determined will, habitually master of itself, always alert and directed by a higher order of motives and inspirations. One of his fellow-monks and friends who knew him well had once compared him to those more vigorous terms of the vocabulary, which, too shocking to be pronounced in their native ruggedness, are clipped and softened when passion brings them to the lips (as it does, even to those of the educated), but which, for all the disguising, make one think of their primitive energy.

If it had been some altogether unknown damsel in Lucia's sad plight who had called on Father Cristoforo for assistance, he would have run to her post-haste. Lucia herself being in question, he answered the summons with all the more alacrity that her innocence was already known to him and elicited his admiration, and that he had already given much thought to her perils and was righteously indignant at the base persecution of which she had become the object. In addition, having counselled her,

as a choice between two evils, to make no disclosure or outcry, he now feared that this counsel had produced bad results, and to the importunity of a charity which was inborn in the man there was now added a painful scrupulosity which not frequently torments the good.

But, while we have been relating Father Cristoforo's history, he has come to the end of his journey and appears in the doorway. The two women, who had been spinning, left the loud, droning wheel, and, starting up, cried in chorus: "Oh, Father Cristoforo! God bless you!"

Chapter V

The person thus addressed stopped on the threshold, and no sooner had his glance rested on the women than he realized that his presentiments were not unfounded. Hence, in the tone of interrogation which anticipates sorry news, and lifting his beard by a slight toss of his head, he said: "Well, my children?" Lucia answered with a flood of tears. The mother began to apologize for presuming—but the friar advanced and, seating himself upon a stool, cut short her excuses by saying to Lucia: "Be calm, my poor child. And do thou," he then said to Agnese, "relate what hath happened." While the good woman told her painful story the best way she could, the friar turned color a thousand times, raising his eyes to heaven and stamping the ground with his feet. At its conclusion he covered his face with his hands and exclaimed: "Great God! how long—!" But without finishing his sentence, he turned to the woman once more, saying: "Poor people! God hath indeed visited you. My poor Lucia!"

"You will not abandon us, father?" said she, sobbing.

"I abandon thee?" he replied. "And with what countenance could I ask aught of God for myself, if I abandon thee? thee in such a plight? thee whom He has entrusted to me? Be of good heart; He will help you; He sees everything; He can make even a useless creature like me serve His purpose to confound a— Come, let me think what is to be done."

So saying, he leaned his left elbow on his knee, resting his forehead on his hand, and clutched his beard and chin with his right hand as if to bring all the powers of his soul firmly together. But all his intense concentration served only to bring out more clearly before his mind the seriousness and intricacy of the problem and the poverty, uncertainty and dangerousness of his resources. Should he try to put Don Abbondio to shame and bring home to him his dereliction of duty? Shame and duty would be alike meaningless to him in his present frightened condition.

As for intimidating him, what other fear would be strong enough to scare away the fear of being shot? Should he inform the archbishop and invoke his authority? That would mean delay, and in the interim? And subsequently? Even though he thus procured the poor girl's marriage, would that curb this villain's licentiousness? To what lengths might he not go? And what hope had he of resisting him? "Ah! could I," thought the poor friar, "could I but gain the support of my confrères here and in Milan! But, alas! it involves not the common interests. I would be deserted. This man passes for a friend of the convent—poses as our supporter. Have not his bravos sought asylum with us more times than one? I would be left in the lurch; they would put me down as a disturber, an interloper, a trouble-monger, and, worse still, my ill-timed attempts might aggravate this poor young creature's misfortune." After balancing these different alternatives, the best course seemed to him that of meeting Don Rodrigo face to face and trying to shake his dastardly purpose by prayers, by the terrors of another life, and if possible, of this also. At the very worst he could by this means gauge more accurately the tenacity with which the other clung to his base undertaking, sound his intentions and be guided accordingly.

While the friar was meditating thus, Renzo, who, for reasons that may be divined, was unable to stay far from Agnese's cottage, had appeared at the doorway; but, seeing the father buried in thought and the women making signs not to interrupt, he remained in silence on the threshold. Upon raising his head to communicate his plan to the mother and daughter, the friar became aware of the youth's presence and greeted him with an affectionate familiarity, rendered more cordial by sympathy.

"They've told you about—father?" asked Renzo in a broken voice.

"Only too much; and for that reason am I here."

"What think you of this scoundrel?"

"What boots it what I think of him? He is not here to listen; why waste words? But thee I tell, Renzo, my son, to trust in God and He will not forsake thee."

"God bless you for those words!" exclaimed the youth. "You are not of those to whom the poor man is always in the wrong. But his reverence, the pastor, and that lawyer who befriends the——"

"Dwell not on such things as can only serve to exasperate thee uselessly. I am only a poor Capuchin friar, but, small as is my power of helping you (I repeat what I have already told these two), you shall not lack it."

"Oh, your friendship is not like the world's! The hollow braggarts! There were no lengths to which their loyalty to me would not go in fair weather—bah! They were ready to give me their life's blood, to back me against the devil himself. Did I have ever an enemy? All I had to do was to say the word and he would cease to breathe. And now see how they play the cur—" At this point, raising his eyes to the monk's face, he saw that it was over-clouded and perceived that it had been fitter not to have spoken. But, wishing to set matters right, he went on involving himself hopelessly in contradictions: "I mean—I do not mean—I would say, that is——"

"What is it thou wouldst say? Shame on thee! Thou hadst begun to mar my work before it was begun. Well for thee that thou hast been disillusioned in time. What! thou wentest in search of friends, and of friends who would not have been able to help thee even had they been willing! And thou soughtest to lose the friendship of Him who alone both can and wills to help. Knowest thou not that God is the friend of those in tribulation if they trust in Him? Knowest thou not that the weak gain naught by displaying their fangs? And say thou hadst succeeded—" Here he seized Renzo's arm in an iron-like grip; his aspect, without abating its authority, became transfigured by a solemn remorse; his eyes fell, and his voice became slow and sepulchral—"and say thou hadst succeeded. The—cost—is—terrible. Renzo, wilt thou put thy trust in me? —what do I say? in me, poor wretch of a friar that I am? Wilt thou put thy trust in God?"

"Yes, yes!" replied Renzo. "He is the only true Sovereign."

"Very well, then; dost thou promise to seek no quarrel nor revenge and to be guided by me?"

"I promise."

Lucia heaved a great sigh as if a weight had been lifted from her heart, and Agnese applauded him with a maternal fervor.

"Hark ye, my children," resumed Father Cristoforo, "I shall go to speak with this man today. If God touches his heart and lends power to my words, all will be well. If not, He will throw some other remedy in our way. Meanwhile stay quietly here in retirement, shun all gossip, see no one. This evening, or tomorrow morning at the latest, you will see me again." So saying, he turned away from their thanks and benisons and set off for the monastery. He arrived in time to recite Sext in choir, dined and started off forthwith for the lair of the savage beast whom he was essaying to tame.

Don Rodrigo's palace reared its solitary form, like a mountain fortress, on the summit of one of those frequent elevations which give the shore its rugged character. To this indication our anonymous author adds that the spot (it had been much simpler to mention the name without more ado) was somewhat higher up than the hamlet where our lovers made their home, at a distance from it of about three miles, and four from the monastery. At the foot of the hill looking towards the lake, a group of ramshackle huts huddled about the foot of the ascent, the homes of Don Rodrigo's tenants and the diminutive capitol, as it were, of his petty kingdom. A glance in passing told one the character and pursuits of the community. On looking into the ground-floor through some door that had been left open, one saw ranged about the walls muskets and blunderbusses, hoes and rakes, straw hats, hair-nettings and powder-flasks in indiscriminate confusion. On the street one met repulsive-looking men with powerful physiques and scowling countenances, wearing great tufts of hair, thrown back over their ears and held in place by nets; old grandsires who, having lost their fangs, yet snarled and showed their gums without any one needing to set them on; women with coarse masculine faces, and brawny arms that came in well when their tongues did not serve; children

who, even at their play, betrayed something inexpressibly surly and exasperating in their faces and movements.

Fra Cristoforo passed through the village, and, mounting the ascent by a winding path, came out upon a small terrace in front of the mansion. The door was shut, a sign that the master of the house was at table and wished for no intrusion. The windows—contracted and far apart—that faced the street were closed in by dilapidated, worm-eaten shutters, and, though they were so high that a man could hardly reach those on the ground-floor by standing on another man's shoulders and their apertures were narrow, still they were defended by heavy iron bars. Deep silence reigned around, and the passer-by might have taken it for a deserted house had it not been that four creatures (two living and two dead), disposed symmetrically without, gave signs of its being inhabited. Two large vultures, their wings spread and their heads dangling downwards, one denuded of its feathers and wasted by age, the other still sound and with plumage unimpaired, were nailed one to each side of the double door; and two bravos, sprawling on benches to the right and left of the entrance, were keeping guard until they should be called to share the fragments from the master's table. The friar stood aside, as if he were preparing to wait, but one of the bravos arose and said to him: "Come in, father; come in. Capuchins are not kept cooling their heels here. The monastery and we are friends. I've stayed there myself when the air outside did not agree with me, and, if you had closed your doors against me on such occasions, 'twould have gone but ill with me." So saying, he gave two raps with the knocker, which were answered immediately from within by the loud baying of mastiffs and the howling of a pack of whelps. After a few moments an aged serving-man arrived, grumbling with displeasure, but, on seeing the father, he made him a low bow, and, after hushing the clamor of the dogs by caresses and coaxing, he ushered the guest into a narrow courtyard and closed the door. Accompanying him then into a waiting-room and regarding him with a mingled air of astonishment and respect, he said: " 'Tis not thou?—Father Cristoforo of Pescarenico?"

"None else."

"Thou here?"

"As you see, my good man."

" 'Twill be for naught but good," he continued to mutter to himself as he walked along. "Good can be done everywhere." Passing through two or three more dimly lighted rooms, they came to the door of the banqueting-hall, where their ears caught the confused din of knives and forks, of plates and glasses, but, above all, of jarring voices trying each to drown the other. The friar was for beating a retreat, and a lively altercation between him and the serving-man for the privilege of being left alone in some corner of the house till the conclusion of the feast, was in progress outside the door, when it opened. A certain Count Attilio, who was seated facing it (he was a cousin of the master of the house, and we have already made mention of him without telling his name), seeing a shaven head and a religious habit and perceiving the good friar's modesty of intention, "Heigh! heigh!" he bawled out, "do not run away from us, reverend father; come in, come in." Don Rodrigo, without guessing precisely the purpose of such a visit, still, on the strength of some indefinable presentiment, would have been willing to dispense with it. But, as long as the rattle-brained Attilio had made this great outcry, he could not without impropriety refuse to fall in with his mood, and said: "Come, father; come in." The monk advanced, bowing to the master of the house and returning the salutation of the company with both hands at once.

Some people (not all) like to picture the good man in presence of the wicked with head erect, shoulders thrown back, imperturbable gaze and a well-limbered tongue. In point of fact, however, many circumstances very rarely found in combination are required to produce such an attitude. Let not my readers wonder, therefore, if Father Cristoforo, with all the testimony his conscience gave him, with his firm belief in the justice of the cause he was coming to champion and with his mingled sentiments of repugnance and compassion for Don Rodrigo, stood with an air of timidity and a kind of awe in the presence of that same Don Rodrigo sitting at the head of his own table, the

autocrat of his own house and kingdom, surrounded by friends and the manifold evidences of rank and power, and wearing an expression of countenance which would try the courage even of a suppliant, not to say of a monitor or an accuser. At his right was seated Count Attilio, his cousin and (if the reader needs to be told) his companion in profligacy and lawlessness, who had come from Milan to spend a short holiday in the country with him. At his left, but to the side of the table, in an attitude of deference qualified by a certain easiness of manner and intellectual coxcombry, sat the podestà, the personage upon whom it devolved in theory to dispense justice to Lorenzo Tramaglino and to apply to Don Rodrigo the rigors of the laws we have read of earlier. Opposite the podestà, but displaying still more genuine and fervent respectfulness, was our friend Doctor Azzecca-Garbugli in his black gown, his nose tinged with a deeper red than usual. At the lower end of the table facing the two cousins were a couple of obscure guests of whom our story has nothing to say further than that they did nothing but eat, bow their heads, smile and assent to everything that was said and not contradicted.

"Give the father a seat," ordered Don Rodrigo. A servant brought a chair, in which Father Cristoforo seated himself, apologizing at the same time to the nobleman for having come at an inopportune moment. "I am very anxious to speak with thee privately at thy leisure on an affair of importance," he then subjoined in a lower tone, audible only to Don Rodrigo.

"Very well, we shall have our talk," the latter replied; "but meanwhile bring the father some wine."

The friar wished to refuse, but Don Rodrigo, raising his voice above the din which had been renewed, cried out: "No, by'r Lady, thou shalt not wrong me so far. Never shall it be said that a Capuchin has gone away from my house without tasting the wine from my cellars, or an insolent creditor without tasting the birches of my forests." These words caused a general laugh and interrupted for an instant the controversy that was waging hotly among the banqueters. A servant presented the monk with a decanter of wine and a tall glass in the shape of a chalice

placed on a salver, and, not wishing to refuse the urgent invitation of a man whom it imported so much to conciliate, he no longer hesitated to fill his glass, and started to sip slowly at its contents.

"Tasso's authority will not bear out your assumption, right worshipful podestà; it even militates against it," Count Attilio began again to bawl out. "Because that prodigy of erudition and genius among men, who had all the rules of chivalry at his finger-tips, has made Argante's herald, before delivering his challenge to the Christian knights, first beg leave of the pious Buglione——"

"An accessory, a mere accessory, poetical filigree," replied the podestà in a no less boisterous tone; "because the messenger's person is inviolable according to the law of nations, *jure gentium;* and we need go no further afield to prove it than our proverb, which says that kings may be punished but not their ambassadors. And proverbs, my lord count, are the wisdom of many and the wit of one. And this messenger, inasmuch as he said nothing on his own account, but only presented the challenge in writing——"

"But will you never understand that the messenger was an impudent ass, who knew not the first rudiments——"

"Under favor of your worships," interrupted Don Rodrigo, who was loath to see the dispute go too far, "let us refer the question to Father Cristoforo and abide by his decision."

"Good, excellent in faith," quoth Count Attilio, to whom it appealed as a capital jest to have a Capuchin pass verdict on a point of chivalry; while the podestà, whose heart was deeper in the dispute, yielded the floor reluctantly and with an expression of face which said plainly: This is the limit of puerility.

"If I have caught the drift of the question," said the father, "these matters are foreign to my calling."

"The answer is dictated only by your professional modesty," said Don Rodrigo, "but you shall not get off so easily. Go to! Do we not know that you were not born with your head in a cowl and that the world has reason to remember you? Come, come! the matter in dispute is this."

"These are the facts in the case," Count Attilio began to vociferate.

"Leave the statement of the case to a neutral, coz," resumed Don Rodrigo. "Thus runs the story. A Spanish knight sends a challenge to a knight of Milan. The herald, not finding the challenged party at home, consigns the missive to the hands of the knight's brother, who reads the challenge and for reply gives the herald a sound thrashing. Now the question is——"

"Well thought of, well laid on!" bellowed out Count Attilio. "It was a real inspiration."

"Of the devil himself," retorted the podestà. "To beat an ambassador! whose person is inviolable! I leave it even to thee, father, if this was an action becoming a noble."

"Yes, worthy sir, very becoming," cried out the count. "My word should go when it is question of what becometh a noble. Oh, if he had used his fists, that were a different matter; but a cudgel soils not the hand. What I cannot understand is the sacredness with which you invest the shoulders of a varlet."

"Who said aught of shoulders? You attribute to me thoughts which never entered my mind. 'Twas his character, not his shoulders, I spoke of. And, above all, I speak of the law of nations. Resolve me, if it please you, if the *faeciales* whom the ancient Romans sent to carry their defiance to other nations, had to ask leave to deliver their message; and quote me a single writer who mentions that a *faecialis* was ever mistreated."

"What have we to do with officials of the ancient Romans? an easy-going sort of people who in such matters as these were woefully unsophisticated. But according to the laws of modern chivalry, which is the true chivalry, I say and I maintain that a herald who dares to hand a challenge to a knight without having obtained his leave to do so is an insolent rascal who may be violated in all violable ways and thrashed in all thrashable ways."

"Answer me this syllogism."

"No, no, no, no!"

"But, listen, listen! To strike an unarmed person is unfair. *Atqui* the herald *de quo* was unarmed. *Ergo*——"

"Softly, softly, worshipful podestà."

"Why softly?"

"Softly, I tell you; what doctrines are you preaching? It is unfair to attack a man from behind with a sword or a musket, although even for this there are precedents—but let us keep to the point. I admit that, generally speaking, such an act would be unfair; but to give three or four welts to a common churl! It would be a fine code indeed that would prescribe for us to say, 'On your guard! I'm going to thrash you,' just as we say among gentlemen, 'Draw and defend thyself'— And you, my learned friend of the law, instead of guffawing your agreement with me, why do you not come to my assistance with your dockets and help me to convince this man of his mistake?"

"I—" stammered the lawyer—"I am enjoying this learned debate, and I bless the lucky accident which gave rise to so brilliant a war of wits. And then, it is outside of my jurisdiction; his illustrious lordship hath already designated an umpire—the father here——"

"True," said Don Rodrigo; "but how can the judge give sentence, when the litigants will not hold their tongues?"

"I'm dumb," said Count Attilio. The podestà bit his lips and threw up his hands in surrender.

"Heaven be praised! Father, you have the floor," quoth Don Rodrigo, with mock solemnity.

"I have already excused myself as knowing nothing about the science," replied Father Cristoforo, returning his goblet to the servant.

"The excuse will not serve you," cried the cousins. "We must have a decision."

"If it be so," rejoined the friar, "then I humbly opine that there should be neither challenges, nor bearers of challenges, nor thrashings."

The company looked at one another in astonishment.

"Oh, this is preposterous!" said Count Attilio. "I crave your pardon, father, but this is preposterous. It is obvious that thou art ignorant of the world."

"He?" quoth Don Rodrigo. "You make me smile. He knows

it, coz, as well as yourself. Am I not right, father? Say whether you have not sowed your wild oats?"

In place of making a reply to this playful query, the father communed silently with himself: Thou art hard hit; but remember, friar, that it is not for thyself thou hast come hither, and what affects thee is as if it had not been said.

"That may be," said Count Attilio; "but the father—what is the father's name?"

"Father Cristoforo," several answered.

"But, Father Cristoforo, my exalted philosopher, with such maxims you would turn the world upside down. No challenges! No thrashing! Then farewell to nice points of honor and full license for base-born varlets to do as they like. Fortunately it is an impossible supposition."

"Come, doctor," urged Don Rodrigo, who wished to divert the question more and more from the principal disputants. "Come, limber your wits, you who know how to make out a case for every one. Let us see what sort of case you will make out for Father Cristoforo."

"In good sooth," replied the lawyer, brandishing the fork in the air and turning to the Capuchin—"in good sooth I am puzzled to know why Father Cristoforo, who is at once the finished religious and man of the world, hath not reflected that his verdict, which would be a gem of logic and wisdom in the pulpit, hath no force whatever (by your favor) in a dispute on chivalry. But the father knoweth better than I that everything is good in its way, and it is my belief that he hath turned a wag to get himself out of a tight place."

What could one reply to arguments deduced from wisdom so old and yet so new? Nothing—which was the reply made by the friar.

But Don Rodrigo, to put a quietus on the whole controversy, proceeded to raise another. "By the way," quoth he, "I hear that there are rumors of a compromise in Milan."

The reader is aware that a dispute was in progress that year for the succession to the Duchy of Mantua, which at the death of Vincenzo Gonzaga, who left no legitimate issue, had passed

to the Duke of Nevers as the nearest of kin. Louis XIII, or Cardinal Richelieu, gave his support to this prince in return for the allegiance he had dutifully transferred to France; while Philip IV—that is to say the Count of Olivares, commonly referred to as the count-duke—was for the self-same reasons opposed to his tenure and had declared war against him. And, since the duchy was a fief of the emperor, the two contestants tried by diplomatic manœuvre, by importunity and by threat, to induce the emperor, Ferdinand II, the former to have him confer the investitures on the new duke, the latter to have him not only withhold his approbation but to expel the usurper.

"I am inclined to believe," said Count Attilio, "that an adjustment is possible. I have certain sources of information——"

"Never believe it, my lord count; never believe it. Even in this remote corner of the earth I am not without means of knowing things. The Spanish commandant, who is good enough to honor me with his friendship, and who, being the son of one of the count-duke's creatures, heareth everything that——"

"I tell thee that my position bringeth me in touch every day with persons of entirely different claims to distinction in Milan; and I know on good authority that the pope, to whose interest it is to see a peace brought about, hath offered proposals——"

"As was to be expected. Entirely in order! His holiness doth only his duty; it's his place to reconcile Christian princes. But the count-duke is a politician who——"

"Bah! Do you know, my friend, what the emperor is thinking of at this moment? Do you think that Mantua is the world? There are many things to claim his attention. Do you know, for instance, how far the emperor can trust Prince Valdistano, or Vallistai, or whatever else his name is, and——"

"The correct pronunciation in German," again interrupted the podestà, "is Vagliensteino, as I have heard the Spanish commandant say it more than once. But do not fear that——"

"Do you presume to teach me—?" the count was beginning, when Don Rodrigo besought him with a look of the eye to cease contradicting, for his sake. The count held his peace, and the podestà, like a good ship dislodged from a sand bar, continued

full sail on his course of eloquence: "Vagliensteino gives me slight concern, for the count-duke hath an eye everywhere, and, if Vagliensteino becomes headstrong and deaf to persuasion, he hath another string to his bow. He hath an eye everywhere, I tell you, and a long arm, and, if he hath once made up that statesman's mind of his—and made it up he hath, and with reason, too—that the Nevers branch is not to strike root in Mantua, strike root it shall not; and Cardinal Richelieu is chasing a will-of-the-wisp. How I have to laugh in my sleeve at the poor dear cardinal who would try conclusions with a count-duke, and an Olivares to boot. I vow that I would fain come back to earth two hundred years hence to hear what posterity will have to say of such pretension. It calleth for more than mere jealousy—it calleth for a head-piece, and there is only one head-piece like the count-duke's in the world. The count-duke, my honorable friends," continued the podestà, still driven full before the wind and mildly astonished at not having struck a reef—"the count-duke is an old fox (speaking with all respect) who knoweth how to throw the keenest off his scent, and who always points to the right when his quarry is to the left. Thus it is that no one can fathom his thought, and even those who carry his plans into execution and write his despatches are as ignorant as the rest. (I can vouch for this, because the Spanish commandant admits me to some degree of intimacy with him.) But on the other hand, the count-duke himself knoweth every scheme of the other courts before it is hatched. Scarce hath an idea taken shape in the brain of other chancellors (and they are not without brains, no doubt of that), when the count-duke, with his long head and his well-masked outposts and his network of invisible communications, hath worked out what is in the other's mind. Poor innocent Cardinal Richelieu trieth one scent, then another, sweats, cudgels his brain; and all to what purpose? To find, when he hath at last sunk his mine, that it hath been already countermined by the count-duke——"

Heaven alone knows when the podestà would have come to anchor; but Don Rodrigo, reading the signal of danger on his cousin's face, turned, as if struck by a sudden inspiration, to a

servant and asked for a certain brand of wine. "Worshipful podestà and honored guests," he then said, "a health to the count-duke; and you shall judge whether this vintage is not worthy of such a personage." The podestà bowed as if in acknowledgment of a personal favor, for he took to himself a share of all the honors and eulogies bestowed upon the count-duke.

"Long live Don Gasparo Guzman, Count of Olivares, Duke of San Lucar, private of our Lord, King Philip the Great!" he exclaimed, lifting aloft his glass.

("Private," for the benefit of those who do not know, was the term then in use to designate the favorite of a prince.)

"Long may he live," replied all.

"Serve the father," ordered Don Rodrigo.

"I crave pardon," answered the father; "but I have already stretched my rule and I could not——"

"What!" said Don Rodrigo, "you will not join in a health to the count-duke? Would you give us to understand that you are of the Navarrini?"

(So they then disparagingly called the French, from the house of Navarre, which had begun with Henry IV to rule the nation.)

At such an adjuration there was no choice but to drink. All the company broke forth into rapturous encomiums on the wine —all except the doctor of the law, whose upturned countenance, fascinated gaze and smacking lips spoke louder than any words.

"What do you say to it, eh! doctor?" asked Don Rodrigo.

Drawing forth from his glass a nose that glowed deeper and glistened brighter than the liquid itself, the doctor replied with emphasis on every syllable: "I say, I maintain and I decree that this is the very Olivares of wines. *Censui et in eam ivi sententiam,* that it is such a liquor as cannot be found elsewhere in all the twenty-two kingdoms of his majesty, whom may God long preserve. I declare and define that the dinners of Don Rodrigo eclipse the banquets of Heliogabalus, and that famine is forever banished and interdicted from this palace, where sumptuousness reigns as in its natural home."

"Bravo! a noble definition!" cried all the company with one voice. But the mention of famine, to which the lawyer had so

inadvertently alluded, turned the minds of all to this melancholy subject, and the famine became the general topic of conversation. Here, at last, was a theme on which all agreed, or the great majority at any rate; but the uproar was probably greater than if there had been dissension. Every one was talking at once. "There is no famine," said one; "it is all these monopolists——"

"And the bakers," said another, "who corner the grain. String them up."

"That's the idea; hang them without mercy."

"After due process of law," roared the podestà.

"Law—rubbish!" roared still louder Count Attilio; "summary justice. Take three or four, or five or six, of such as are known by common report as the richest and the most grasping, and hang them."

"Make an example of them! Without examples nothing will be accomplished."

"Hang them! hang them! and grain will everywhere appear by magic."

If it is the privilege of any of my readers, ever in passing by a fair, to have heard the harmony which a company of mountebanks make when, between numbers, they take to tuning their instruments, each one sounding his own so that he can hear it distinctly above the general din, he can form an idea of the euphony produced by such a conversation, if conversation it could be called. Meanwhile the famous wine was flowing freely, and its praises were very appropriately commingled with fragments of political economy, so that the two words most frequently heard and most clearly distinguished were "Ambrosia" and "Hang them."

At intervals during all this time Don Rodrigo would steal glances at the solitary figure which sat silently among them—always motionless, without a trace of impatience or hurry or the least indication that he was waiting for some one, but with the air of a man who was not going away without a hearing. He would most gladly have sent him off and dispensed with the interview; but to dismiss a Capuchin without giving him an audience did not jump with his policies. Since the ordeal could

not be avoided, he made up his mind to face it without further delay and have it over; so he arose from the table, and the whole rosy-gilled company along with him, without interrupting for a moment the noise of their revelry. Then, excusing himself to his guests, he stiffly approached the friar, who had risen with the rest, and with the words, "I am now at your service," led him into another apartment.

Chapter VI

"In what can I be of service to you?" said Don Rodrigo, taking his stand in the middle of the room. Such were his actual words; but his manner of pronouncing them signified plainly: Consider where thou art, weigh thy words and use despatch.

There was no surer or quicker way of infusing courage into Fra Cristoforo than to deal cavalierly with him. He who stood hesitatingly, at a loss for words and fingering at the beads of the rosary attached to his girdle as if he hoped to find his exordium in one of them, at this show of haughtiness on Don Rodrigo's part suddenly felt his tongue loosed beyond the requirements of the occasion. But, reflecting upon the importance of not compromising his interests, or, what was worse still, another's interests, he qualified and chastened the expressions that were on his tongue and said with humble circumspectness: "I come to propose to thee an act of justice and make an appeal to thy charity. Certain disreputable men have made use of your illustrious lordship's name to intimidate a poor priest and hinder him from fulfilling his duty, and to practice oppression on two innocent persons. Your lordship can by a word confound the former, remove the obstacles which obstruct the course of justice and bring happiness to those who have suffered this cruel interference. You are able to do so, and, being able—your conscience, your honor——"

"You may speak to me of my conscience, when I come to you to be shrived. As for my honor, I would have you know that I am its warden—I alone—and that I regard any one who aspires to its partnership with me in the same light as the wretch who would impugn it."

Fra Cristoforo, warned by these words that the noble meant to be captious and thus divert the conversation from the main issue into a quarrel, pledged himself to further forbearance and resolved to swallow any insult the other might be pleased to offer.

Assuming a subdued tone, he replied instantly: "If my words have given thee offence, it was certainly contrary to my intention. Reprove me and take me to task, if my speech be unmannerly; but deign to listen to me. In the name of Heaven and of that God before whom we must all one day stand" (so saying, he had taken into his fingers the miniature wooden skull that depended from his rosary and was holding it up to the eyes of the frowning listener) "do not persist in withholding a justice so easily granted, so rightfully due to the poorest of God's creatures. Reflect that His eyes are always upon them and that their cries and groans are heard above. Innocence is all-powerful before His——"

"Hah, father!" rudely interrupted Don Rodrigo. "The respect I bear your habit is great; but if there is one thing that could make me forget it, it would be to see it worn by one who dared to come into my house as a spy."

These words brought the blood rushing to the friar's face, but, with the expression of one swallowing a bitter draught of medicine, he rejoined: "Your lordship does not believe that such an appellation belongs to me. Thou feelest in thy heart that my present mission is neither base nor contemptible. Hear me, Don Rodrigo, and Heaven grant the day will not come when you will repent for not having listened. Do not set your glory—glory, Don Rodrigo? what is the glory of men? And before God? You have much power here below, but——"

"Do you fancy," said Don Rodrigo, breaking in in anger, but not without some creeping of the flesh—"do you fancy that, if I were taken with a whim to hear a sermon, I would not know enough to go to church like other folk? But in my own house! Oh," he continued with a forced smile of contempt, "you honor me above my station. It is only princes who have preachers under their own roofs."

"And that God who demandeth a reckoning of princes for the words He addresseth to them in their palaces, that God who giveth thee a chance for mercy in sending one of His ministers, an unworthy and sinful one, but still His minister, to plead for an innocent——"

"Briefly, father," said Don Rodrigo, in the act of leaving, "I know not what you are driving at. I only gather that there must be some maid in whom you are mightily concerned. Go unbosom your secrets to whom you please and desist from annoying a gentleman further."

The friar, on seeing Don Rodrigo start to retire, respectfully blocked his way, and, holding out his hands in an attitude of supplication, and at the same time of interference, persisted: "I am indeed concerned in her, but in thee no less; your two souls concern me more than my life. Don Rodrigo, I can but pray for thee; but that I shall do from my heart. Deny not my appeal; release an innocent creature from her anguish and terror. One word from thee does all."

"Very well," said Don Rodrigo. "Since you believe in my ability to do so much for this person; since the person is so dear to you——"

"Well?" anxiously rejoined Father Cristoforo, whom Don Rodrigo's air and mien forbade to indulge the hope which these words seemed to convey.

"Why, advise her to come and put herself under my protection. She shall want for nothing thenceforward, and none shall vex her, or I am no knight."

At such a proposal the friar's indignation, which he had hitherto repressed with difficulty, broke all bounds. All his fine resolutions of prudence and forbearance melted into air; the old man and the new were in accord, and in such cases Fra Cristoforo's strength was really the strength of two. "Your protection!" he exclaimed, recoiling a couple of steps and drawing himself up proudly to his full height, his right hand pressed against his side and his left pointing a defiant finger at Don Rodrigo, on whom his blazing eyes were riveted—"your protection! 'Tis well that you have spoken so, well that you have made me such a proposal. Now the measure of your iniquities is full, and I no longer fear you."

"What manner of speaking is this, friar——?"

"I speak as to one abandoned by God and no longer capable of inspiring fear. Your protection! I well knew that her

innocence was under God's protection, but now you—you yourself—have filled me with such a certainty, that there is no longer need of guardedness with you. Lucia, I say—see how I pronounce her name with an unbended brow and an unflinching eye."

"What! in my own house——!"

"Oh, my heart bleeds for this house. A curse hangs over it. You shall soon see whether a just God will be deterred by four walls and a brace of sentries. You thought that God had fashioned a creature in His likeness to be your plaything! You thought that God could not defend her! You spurned His warning! You have sat in judgment on yourself. Pharaoh's heart was hardened even as yours, but God found a way to crush it. Lucia is safe from you, I tell you—I, a poor friar. As to yourself, heed well what I prophesy. The day will come——"

Don Rodrigo, up to this, had stood halting between rage and bewilderment, rooted speechless to the spot; but, when he heard this prelude to a prophecy, into his anger entered the element of a vague, mysterious dread.

Quick as a flash he seized the upraised hand of doom, and, raising his voice to drown the words of ill-omen, he cried: "Get out of my sight, insolent churl, canting varlet of a friar!"

This crisp objurgation restored Father Cristoforo to instant calm. The idea of silent submission was so closely and so inveterately associated in his mind with that of contumely and vituperation that, at the sound of such epithets, his wrath and exaltation of spirit all forsook him and he was left without any other guiding motive than meekly to hear whatever Don Rodrigo might please to say. So, calmly withdrawing his hand from the nobleman's clutches, he bowed his head and stood motionless—like a tree which in the very height of a storm stops its tumultuous swaying at the falling of the wind and waits with all its leaves unruffled to receive the hail as heaven wills to send it.

"Base gutter-bred knave!" pursued Don Rodrigo. "Such language befits your origin. But thank the dirty gown which covers your rascally shoulders and saves you from the drubbing which

your likes deserve till they learn to speak with a civil tongue. Take to your heels for the present, and I'll see to you anon."

So saying, he pointed with imperious disdain at a door opposite that by which they had entered. Father Cristoforo bowed his head and withdrew, leaving Don Rodrigo measuring with furious strides the field of battle.

When the friar had closed the door behind him, he saw, in the apartment which he had just entered, a man skulking away along the wall, as if to avoid being seen from the chamber where the interview had taken place. He recognized in him the old serving-man who had admitted him at the door of the house. This man had been in the house for probably forty years, or before Don Rodrigo was born, having taken service with the father, who had belonged to an entirely different school. At his death the young master of the house, while dismissing all the old employees and reconstituting the household, had retained this one servant, both in deference to his age, and because, though of different principles and habits from his own, he had two qualities which compensated for such a defect: a high opinion of the dignity of the house and great adeptness in ceremonial, whose most ancient traditions and minutest details he knew better than any one else. In presence of his master the poor man would never have had the hardihood to hint at, much less to give expression to, his disapproval of what he saw going on all the day; scarce would a smothered exclamation of dismay or censure escape his lips in the company of his fellow-servants, who laughed at him and occasionally took delight in egging him on to say more than he would have wished and sing the praises of the old style of life in that house. His strictures reached the ears of the master only after they had been embellished by accounts of the laughter they had provoked, so that, even with him, they were regarded as harmless matters for jest. Then, on days of entertaining and reception, the old man became a personage of consideration and importance.

Father Cristoforo regarded him in passing, and making him a bow of recognition, was pursuing his way; but the old man drew towards him with a mysterious air, then, placing the tip of his

finger on his lips, he motioned him to follow into a dark passageway. Once there, he said in a low voice: "Father, I have heard all and I must speak with you."

"Speak out quickly, my good man."

"Not here. Woe to me if the master finds out. But I have much to tell, and tomorrow I shall try to go to the monastery."

"There is some plot afoot."

"Something in the wind, to be sure; of that I am already aware. But now I shall keep my ear to the ground, and it is my hope to learn all. Leave it to me. Such things as it is my lot to hear!—things to make one's hair stand on end! I live in a house—! But I would fain save my soul."

"The Lord bless thee!" Uttering these words in an undertone, the friar put his hand on the servant's head, who, though his senior, stood bending like a child before his father. "The Lord will reward thee," pursued the friar. "Fail not to come tomorrow."

"I will," replied the servant; "but do thou depart without more delay, and—in the name of Heaven—mention not my name." So saying and looking about him, he went out by the other end of the passageway into a reception-room which gave on the courtyard, and, seeing the coast clear, summoned the good friar, whose countenance conveyed more reassurance to the old man than any protestations could have done. The servant pointed out the entrance, and the friar withdrew without further remark.

And this man who had listened at the keyhole of his master's closet—had he acted right? And had Fra Cristoforo done well in commending him? According to the most generally received and least controverted rules it was an ugly thing to do. But could not this case be regarded as an exception? Or do the most generally received and least controverted rules admit of exceptions? All are important questions, which the reader will have to resolve for himself, if he has a mind to them. We have not set up to pass verdicts but to write history.

Upon getting out and turning his back upon the house of iniquity, Fra Cristoforo breathed more freely. He hastened

down the ascent, his face all aflame and his thoughts and feelings upset, as one may well imagine, with the things he had heard and said. But the old serving-man's unexpected tender acted on him as a powerful restorative. It seemed to him that Heaven had given a visible token of assistance. "Lo! a clue," he thought—"a clue that Providence giveth me for my guidance. And under the same roof! and without my dreaming of looking for it!" Ruminating in such wise, he lifted his eyes towards the west, and, seeing the disk of the setting sun almost resting on the mountains, he reflected that the daylight was well-nigh spent. Then, though his bones were aching from the day's fatigue, he quickened his pace so as to be able to make a report, such as it was, to his protégés and reach home before nightfall—this being one of the strictest and most rigidly enforced rules of the Capuchin code.

Meanwhile plans had been broached and discussed in Agnese's cottage of which we must advise the reader. After the friar's departure the trio remained for a while in silence; Lucia sadly preparing the meal, Renzo momentarily on the point of fleeing from the sight of her grief but unable to tear himself away and Agnese at the wheel apparently intent upon her spinning. In reality she was maturing a plan, and, when it appeared quite ripe, she broke the silence thus:

"Hark ye, my children. If your heart and wit are equal to it and you put confidence in your mother" (at this unwonted "your" Lucia started), "I will undertake to get you out of this hole, more effectually, maybe, and more quickly than Father Cristoforo, for all the wonderful man he is." Lucia stood stock-still staring at her mother, her face wearing an expression more of astonishment than of confidence in such a magnificent promise. Renzo pounced on the words "heart and wit." "Tarry not, but tell us what can be done."

"If you were once married," continued Agnese, "you would be a leg in advance, would you not? and could see the rest of your way more clearly."

"What doubt of it?" quoth Renzo. "Once married—the world is wide. Just across the Bergamask frontier, a good silk-spinner

is welcomed with open arms. You know how often my cousin Bortolo hath pressed me to go thither with him and make my fortune as he hath made his. And, if I did not give ear to him, it was because (why not own the truth?)—because my heart was here. But, with the Church's blessing on our union, we can all go together, make a home for ourselves and live in peace and quiet—out of the reach of this beast and far from the temptation to do something rash. It is not so, Lucia?"

"Yes," said Lucia; "but how——?"

"I have told you how," rejoined the mother. "Courage and address, and the thing is easy."

"Easy!" together exclaimed the twain, who had found it peculiarly and painfully difficult.

"Easy, so you know the trick of it," replied Agnese; "and I shall try to make it clear to you. I have heard it said by those who know, and I even saw it tried out once upon a time, how that marriage demandeth a priest, but not his consent. Enough that he be there."

"What riddle is this?" asked Renzo.

"Listen, and you will know. First, you must have two witnesses who will be alert and well primed. Then you go to the pastor's. The point is to catch him unaware, so that he has no time to get away from you. The man saith: 'Your reverence, this is my wife.' The woman saith: 'Your reverence, this is my husband.' The priest must hear them, so must the witnesses, and then the bonds of wedlock are forged as tight and as sacred as if the pope had married you. When the words are pronounced, the pastor can rant and fume and raise the de'il, but all to no purpose; you are man and wife."

"Really?" exclaimed Lucia.

"What! really?" said Agnese. "Wait and see whether I spent thirty years in this world before your births without having learned anything. It is e'en as I have told you—so surely that a friend of mine, who wished to marry against her parents' will, gained her point by this means. The pastor, suspecting their intention, was on his guard, but the rascals were smart enough to catch him napping for a moment, got in the words and went

off husband and wife. And, by the same token, the poor creature repented of it before three days were out."

Agnese spoke the truth, both as to the device and the danger of failure. Because, since only such persons had recourse to it as had found the ordinary path closed to them or strewn with difficulties, priests exerted great care to prevent this forced co-operation; and, when one of them was surprised, notwithstanding, by such a pair accompanied by witnesses, he tried as hard to elude them as Proteus did to elude those who would have made him prophesy by force.

"If it were true, Lucia!" said Renzo, regarding her with a wistful air.

"If it were true?" quoth Agnese. "You, too, think I am romancing. I fret and worry about you, and then I am not believed. Very well; get out of it your own way. I wash my hands of you."

"Ah, no. Do not forsake us," said Renzo. "I speak thus only because it seemeth too good to be true. I am in your hands; I look on you as if you were my own mother."

These words appeased Agnese's slight indignation and made her forget a declaration which had not, in truth, been seriously meant.

"But, mamma," said Lucia in that demure way of hers, "why then did this not occur to Father Cristoforo?"

"Occur to him?" replied Agnese. "You may be sure it occurred to him. But he would not be wanting to speak of it."

"Why not?" demanded with one voice the two young people.

"Because—because, if you must know, the clergy say that it really is not a proper proceeding."

"How can it be improper if it holds?" said Renzo.

"How can I tell?" replied Agnese. "They have made the law as it suited them, and we poor creatures cannot grasp its whole bearing. How many other matters—See you! 'Tis like a Christian throttling his fellow-man. It is not proper; but, once it is done, the pope cannot undo it."

"If it is not proper," said Lucia, "we must not do it."

"What!" said Agnese. "Would I give you godless advice? If

it were against your parents' wishes and to marry a runagate—But with me well content and such an honest lad to husband, and no one interfering but a scoundrel; and the pastor——"

"'Tis plain. Everyone would see it," said Renzo.

"There is no need of telling Father Cristoforo beforehand," continued Agnese; "but, once it's done and over with, what will the father say? 'Ah! my child, it is a roguish trick you have played on me!' The cloth must speak like that; but in his heart, believe me, he too will be glad."

Lucia, though at a loss how to answer such reasonings, seemed not to be satisfied with them; but Renzo was sanguine. "If it be so," he said, "it is as good as done."

"Not so fast," said Agnese. "How about your witnesses? Where will you find two who both are willing, and can hold their tongues? And how will you catch the pastor who for two days hath been mewed up in his house? And keep him from absconding? Because, though unwieldy by nature, I promise you he will become nimble as a cat seeing you come before him in such guise, and away he will flee like the devil from holy water."

"I have it, I have it," said Renzo, bringing his fist down so as to make the dishes rattle upon the table, which was set for the meal. He then went on setting forth his plan, which Agnese approved throughout.

"This is all underhand scheming," said Lucia. "Hitherto we have dealt openly; let us continue to do so with faith in God, and He will help us. Father Cristoforo hath said it. Let us seek his advice."

"Be said by those who know better than you," said Agnese with a grave countenance. "What need is there of seeking advice? God helps those who help themselves. We shall tell the father all when it is over with."

"Lucia," said Renzo, "are you going to fail me now? Did we not do all that good Christians should? Should we not now be husband and wife? Had not the pastor himself appointed the day and the hour? And whose fault is it if now we must call in our wits to help us? No, you will not go back on me. I

shall soon return with a reply." Then, with a parting look of entreaty at Lucia and of mutual understanding at Agnese, he went off in haste.

Tribulation is a spur to inventiveness. Renzo, who in the even tenor of an upright life had never up to that time been in a position that called forth all his resources, in this instance bethought himself of a scheme which would have done credit to a lawyer. In pursuance of it he now went straight to the cottage of a near neighbor of his named Tonio. He found him on his knee before the fireplace in the kitchen, with one hand holding the rim of a kettle placed on the live coals, while with the other he was stirring its meagre contents of greyish hasty-pudding by means of a wooden handle. Tonio's mother, his brother and his wife sat at table. Standing ranged by his side were three or four small children with their eyes fixed on the pudding in anticipation of the moment for dishing it up. But that cheerfulness which the sight of dinner is wont to create in those who have earned it by the sweat of their brow was absent. The size of the hasty-pudding had been gauged, not by the heartiness of its partakers, but by the scarcity of the harvest; and each one of them seemed to be thinking, as he fixed a rueful look of ravenous hunger on the family rations, of the amount of appetite that was destined to survive. While Renzo exchanged greetings with the family, Tonio emptied the pudding in a beechen bowl which stood ready to receive it, and, in the cloud of steam that arose, it looked not unlike a pigmy moon in a gigantic halo of mist. This latter fact did not prevent the women-folk from extending a polite invitation to Renzo to share their cheer—a form of courtesy which the peasant of Lombardy (and who knows of how many other places?) never fails to observe towards whosoever knocks at his door at meal-time, even though the latter had just arisen from a well-filled table and he were eating his last mouthful.

"Thank you," replied Renzo. "I came only to have a word with Tonio; and, if you will, Tonio, we can go to the inn, so as not to be in the women's way, and have our chat there."

The suggestion was all the more acceptable to Tonio as it

came unexpectedly; and his mother and wife, and also his children (because, in such matters, their reasons begin to work early) saw no harm in one of the competitors for the hasty-pudding, and he the most formidable of all, withdrawing from the contest. Renzo's guest, without asking any more questions, started off in company with him.

They found the inn a perfect solitude, the hard times having stripped such places of delights of their frequenters; and so they were able to sit and talk in absolute freedom. Ordering what meagre fare the place afforded and tossing off a cup of wine, Renzo put on an air of mystery and said to Tonio: "If you are minded to do a small favor to me, I am minded to do you a great one."

"Speak out. I am at your service," replied Tonio, filling his glass. "I would go through fire and water for you today."

"You are indebted to the pastor in the sum of twenty-five *lire* for the rent of his field which you had under cultivation last year."

"Ah, Renzo, Renzo, you have taken all the good out of your treat. Of what are you reminding me? My lightheartedness is killed."

"If I speak of your indebtedness," said Renzo, "it is because I intend to give you the wherewith, if so be you are willing, to pay it off."

"Really?"

"Really. And are you satisfied?"

"Satisfied? By'r Lady, you may say that I am satisfied. And if for no other reason than to see his reverence no more wag his head and look sour whenever we meet. And then his everlasting 'Don't forget, Tonio,' and 'Tonio, when are we going to wind up that business?' To such a pass hath it come that I am half afraid, when his eyes rest on me during a sermon, that he is going to cast up my twenty-five *lire* to me there in public. A murrain on the twenty-five *lire,* say I. And too, he would then have to return my wife's gold necklace, which I could put into hasty-pudding. But——"

"But, but, but. If you are willing to do me a little turn, the twenty-five *lire* are yours."

"Name the turn."

"But——" quoth Renzo, placing the tip of his finger on his lips.

"Is that called for? You know me."

"Our worshipful pastor will be putting forward one senseless pretext after another to delay my marriage, while I would have prompt service. I am assured that by presenting ourselves with two witnesses before him and saying, I: 'This is my wife,' and Lucia: 'This is my husband,' we are there and then wed. Have you understood?"

"You would have me go along as a witness?"

"Exactly."

"And you will pay off the twenty-five *lire?"*

"Such is my purpose."

"Call me rogue if I fail you."

"But we need another witness."

"I have him already. That half-witted brother of mine, Gervaso, will do whatever I tell him. You will buy him something to drink?"

"And to eat, too," replied Renzo. "We will bring him here to make merry with us. But will he know what to do?"

"I'll school him. I have brains for the two of us, you know."

"Tomorrow——"

"Very well."

"Towards evening."

"Very good."

"But——!" said Renzo, putting his finger-tip again to his lips.

"Bah——!" replied Tonio, tossing his head and making a deprecating gesture with his left hand.

"But, if your wife asks questions, as she, no doubt, will——"

"I owe my wife so many lies now that I doubt if I shall ever wipe out my arrears. I shall trump up something to set her heart at rest."

"Tomorrow," said Renzo, "we shall talk at greater length, so as to have a perfect understanding."

With this, they left the inn, Tonio to wend his way homeward, pondering as he went what cock-and-bull story he should tell the women-folk, and Renzo to make a report of the measures that had been concerted.

Agnese had been exerting herself all this while to persuade her daughter. The latter opposed to each argument now one, now the other, horn of her dilemma: either the thing is wrong, and we should not do it; or it is not wrong, and then, why not tell Father Cristoforo?

Renzo arrived triumphant, made his report and concluded it by an *Ahn?*—an interjection which means, Now am I a man, or not? Could you find a likelier? Would it ever have entered your head? And a hundred things of the same tenor.

Lucia softly shook her head; but, in their fervency, the other two took small notice of her, as we are wont to do with a child, whom we do not hope to make understand all the reasons for a thing, but who will be brought to do what is wanted of it in the event either by persuasion or by authority.

"Very good," said Agnese; "very good. But—but you have not thought of everything."

"What is lacking?" replied Renzo.

"What about Perpetua? You have left Perpetua out of calculation. Tonio and his brother will pass muster with her; but you! you two! Think a minute. She will have orders to keep you farther off than a boy from a pear-tree with ripe fruit."

"What shall we do?" said Renzo, in some perplexity.

"See, I have thought it out. I shall go along with you. I have a secret to catch her ear, and I will charm her so that she will not perceive you, and you can slip in. I'll call to her and strike such a chord—you'll see."

"Blessings light on you!" exclaimed Renzo. "I have always said that you are our help in every need."

"But all this skills nothing," said Agnese, "unless this baggage here can be brought round. She persists in saying it is wrong."

Renzo, too, brought his eloquence to bear; but Lucia was unmoved.

"I do not know," she said, "how to answer your arguments,

but what I do see is that, to do such a thing, we should have to plunge headlong into a course of deception, lying and insincerity. Ah, Renzo, it was not thus that we started out. I want to be your wife" (and she could not pronounce the words nor avow such an intention without blushing) "—I want to be your wife, but by straightforward, God-fearing means and before the altar. Let us leave it to the One who is above. Will He not find a way out better than we could do with all this chicanery? And why keep Father Cristoforo in the dark?"

So the debate dragged on without seeming to be any closer to an end, when the hurried patter of sandalled feet and the flapping of robes, like the sound of a flag whipped by the wind, announced the arrival of Father Cristoforo. A hush fell upon them all, and Agnese had barely time to whisper into Lucia's ear: "Mind you well, now, not to say aught to him."

Chapter VII

Father Cristoforo, upon his arrival, bore the air of an able general after losing an important engagement through circumstances beyond his own control. One sees, as he proceeds from post to post where his attention is demanded, strengthening quarters that are hard pressed, rallying his troop and issuing fresh commands, all the difference that separate disappointment from discouragement, intense seriousness from dismay, business-like hurry from panicky haste.

"Peace be with you," said he upon entering. "There is nothing to hope for from man—so much the more need to trust in God; and I already have some earnest of His protection."

None of the three had reposed much hope in the step taken by Father Cristoforo, since it approached more the unheard-of than the unusual to see a powerful oppressor withdraw from his undertaking through no compulsion but merely out of deference to the pleadings of unarmed intercession; but the melancholy certainty was, none the less, a blow for all. The women bowed their heads, but with Renzo anger prevailed over dejection; the announcement came on the heels of so many painful disappointments, so many fruitless tentatives, so many deluded hopes, which had filled his soul with bitterness, aggravated at the moment, moreover, by the repulses of Lucia.

"I would fain know," he cried out, gnashing his teeth and pitching his voice higher than he had ever before done in Padre Cristoforo's presence—"I would fain know what reasons that hell-hound gave for claiming that my betrothed is not to be mine."

"Poor Renzo!" replied the friar with a grave, sympathetic voice that amiably imposed peacefulness. "If these powerful malefactors were obliged to give a reason for the injustice which they contemplate doing, things would not go as they do."

"Has the bandog, then, said that he won't because he won't?"

"Not even that, my poor Renzo. It would be already an advantage if iniquity had openly to confess itself as such."

"But he must have said something. What were his words, the brand of hell?"

"I have heard his words, and still I could not repeat them. The words of the wicked in high place are as elusive as they are brutal. He can fly into a rage at your seeming to suspect him, and at the same time make you feel that your suspicions are well grounded; he can be insulting, and appear the insulted one, abusive, and make you look unfair; he can terrify you while he poses as a victim of injustice, and be superior to all reproach even in the act of flaunting his vices in your face. Ask me no more about it. He did not pronounce the name of this innocent lamb here, or yours. He made out not even to know of you, nor to have any designs on you. But—but I could divine only too easily that he is inflexible. Still, trust in God. Poor souls, do not lose courage. And Renzo!—Oh! be assured that I can put myself in your place, and that I know just what is going on in your soul. But be patient. Patience! Ah, it has a hollow and forbidding sound to those who believe not; but you—are you not willing to wait one day for God to bring about the triumph of justice? two days? as long as He will? Time is His, and He hath promised us so much of it! Leave it all to Him, Renzo; and know this, all of you, that I already have a clue to aid you withal. For the present I can say no more. I shall not come tomorrow; I must abide all day in the monastery for your sakes. Try to come thither, Renzo; or, if for some unforeseen reason you are not able, send a trustworthy man in your place, some young fellow of judgment, by whom I can let you know what is to be done. It grows dark; I must hasten to the monastery. Slacken not your faith, be of good courage, and good-night."

So saying, he hurried forth, running, almost leaping, down the twisting, rocky pathway, so as not to arrive late at the monastery and thus earn for himself a good reprimand, or, what he would have taken still more to heart, a penance that would prevent

him on the following day from regulating his movements freely and promptly according to the needs of his protégés.

"Did you hear what he said about—what was it?—some clue he has to help us withal?" said Lucia. "Our proper course is to trust to him. He is a man who promises in farthings but who fulfils in——"

"If that be all—!" interrupted Agnese. "He should have spoken more plainly, or else called me aside and told me what this—this——"

"Stuff and nonsense! I shall end the whole thing!" interrupted Renzo this time, pacing up and down the room and assuming a tone of voice and an expression of countenance that left no room for doubt as to the meaning of his words.

"Oh, Renzo!" Lucia exclaimed.

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Agnese.

"What need to say? I shall end the whole thing. Let him have a devil, or a whole legion of devils, still he is of flesh and blood——"

"No, no, in Heaven's name—" began Lucia; but a flood of tears drowned her voice.

"These are no threats to make even in iest," said Agnese.

"In jest?" screamed Renzo, facing Agnese and fixing her with eyes starting from their sockets. "In jest! You shall see if it is in jest."

"Oh, Renzo!" said Lucia, with difficulty, between sobs. "I have never seen thee thus before."

"Don't say such things, in the name of Heaven," Agnese hastily resumed, lowering her voice. "Don't you remember how many he hath to execute his behests? And even though—God forbid! —the poor are always brought to justice."

"Justice! I shall bring justice about. 'Tis high time. I know it is not easy. He is well guarded. The blood-thirsty scoundrel knows what need he hath to be so. But no matter; I shall be resolute. I shall be patient, and the hour will come. Yes, I shall bring justice about myself. I'll rid the land of him, and people will bless me for it. Then in a hop, skip and a jump——"

The horror which words of such obvious import inspired in Lucia checked her weeping and gave her strength to speak. Raising a tear-stained face from her hands, she said to Renzo in heart-broken accents, but firmly withal: "Do you lay no store, then, on having me to wife? I plighted my troth to a God-fearing youth; but as for a man who had—even though he were out of the reach of laws and vengeance, even though he were the king's son——"

"So be it!" cried Renzo, wilder-eyed than ever. "You will not be mine, but neither shall you be his. I hereby commit myself to bachelorhood and him to perdition."

"Ah, no! I beseech you not to say such things nor to look so. No, I cannot endure the sight," exclaimed Lucia, weeping and supplicating him with uplifted hands; while Agnese repeated the youth's name over and over again and soothingly chafed his hands, his arms and his shoulders. He remained for some time pensive, motionless, contemplating Lucia's suppliant attitude. Then, all of a sudden, he drew back, and with eyes half averted and his finger pointing at her, he screamed: "Her! He have her! No, he must die!"

"And I, what wrong have I done, that you would ruin my life?" said Lucia, drawing towards him on her knees.

"You!" he replied in a tone that vibrated with wrath, but of a different kind—"you! What kindness have you felt for me, or, at least, what proofs have you given me of it? Have I not prayed and begged and besought, and have not you denied all my petitions?"

"No, no," replied Lucia abruptly. "I will go with you to the pastor's tomorrow, today, if you will. I will go. Return to your former self. I will go."

"Do you promise?" said Renzo, his voice and countenance becoming of a sudden more human.

"I promise."

"I have your pledge."

"Thanks be to God!" exclaimed Agnese, doubly satisfied with this result.

In the midst of his towering rage had Renzo calculated the

advantage that he might reap from Lucia's fright? And had he not used some little artifice to augment it and bring it to fruition? Our anonymous author protests that he has no knowledge on this point, and I believe that Renzo did not know very well himself. The fact is that he really was infuriated against Don Rodrigo, and that he was dying for Lucia's consent; and when two strong passions are wrestling in a man's bosom, no one, not even the man himself, can always distinguish one voice from the other, or say which predominates.

"I have promised," Lucia replied in a tone of timid affectionate rebuke; "but you, too, had promised not to cause scandal, but to have recourse to Father Cristoforo——"

"Go to. For whose sake do I lose my temper? Will you draw back again and drive me to desperation?"

"No, no," said Lucia, her fears beginning to revive. "I have promised, and I shall not draw back. But look and see how you forced me to it. Please God it may not——"

"Why these evil auguries, Lucia? God knoweth that we do no one any harm."

"Promise me at least that there shall be no more capers."

"I promise, as I am a Christian."

"And this time do you hold to your promise," quoth Agnese.

Here our author confesses himself in the dark on another matter—whether Lucia's displeasure at being forced to consent was entirely unreserved and unmitigated. We shall follow his example and leave the case open.

Renzo would fain have prolonged the conversation and settled, point by point, the program for the following day; but darkness had already fallen, and the two women, deeming it unbecoming to detain their visitor any later, bade him good-night.

It was to be for all three, however, only such a "good" night as comes after a day of excitement and trouble and ushers in another destined for enterprises of great moment but of doubtful issue. Renzo made his appearance at an early hour, and together with the women, or rather, with Agnese, concerted plans for the evening's business, resolving difficulties and suggesting others in turn, foreseeing possible miscarriages, and then revamping the

whole story from the beginning as if it were an accomplished fact. Lucia listened, and without approving by word what in her heart she condemned, promised to do the best she could.

"And will you go up to the monastery to talk to Father Cristoforo, as he told you to do yestere'en?" Agnese asked of Renzo.

"The de'il!" replied he. "You know those gimlet eyes of his. He would read it in my face, as in an open book, that something is in the wind; and, if he once began to ply me with questions, the cat would be out of the bag. Besides, I must stay here to see after things. You had better send someone else."

"I'll send Menico."

"Good," replied Renzo, who then left to see after things, as he had said.

Agnese went out to a neighbor's house to look for Menico, a lad of about twelve, but sharp above his years, who through a long line of cousins came to be a sort of distant nephew of hers. She borrowed him from his parents for the day, "For a certain chore," she said. Having gained possession of the lad, she brought him into the kitchen, and, after some refreshment, told him to go to Pescarenico and call for Father Cristoforo, who would send him back with a reply when the time came. "Father Cristoforo, that handsome old man with a white beard, you know, whom they call the saint——"

"I know," said Menico; "the one who always pats us boys on the head, and gives us holy pictures now and then."

"Exactly, Menico. And, if he tells you to wait awhile near the monastery, don't wander off. Take heed not to go with the other boys to the lake to watch the fishermen, nor to play with the nets hung up to dry, nor to be led away by that favorite game of yours——"

The reader should understand that Menico was a very valiant player at ducks-and-drakes, and every one knows that all of us, big and little, like to engage in the pursuits in which we have facility—God forbid I should say that those are the only ones we like to engage in.

"Bah! aunt; I am no child."

"Well, be good, and see! when you return, these two bright new *parpagliole* will be yours."

"Give me them now. It's all one."

"No, no, you would stake them at play. Behave well, and there will be more of them for you."

During the remaining long hours of the morning certain developments took place that injected not a little suspicion into the already troubled state of mind of Lucia and her mother. A beggar, without the usual raggedness and symptoms of distress of his class, but betraying something peculiarly dark and sinister in his features, came in to ask for alms, meanwhile casting furtive glances here and there about the house. He was given a piece of bread, which he accepted and put up with ill-concealed unconcern, tarrying a few moments to ask some questions, with a mixture of swagger and hesitancy in his manner. Agnese was quick to return replies that were always the contrary of the truth. Making as if he would go out, he feigned to mistake the doorway, and entering that which led upstairs, he completed a hurried survey of the surroundings as best he might. On being greeted with a "Ho there! my good man; where would you go? This way, this way," he turned back and went off in the direction indicated, making apologies with an affected meekness and humility that his hardened lineaments could with difficulty portray. After him still other odd-looking individuals made their appearance. What class of men they were it would have been difficult to say, but it was just as difficult to believe them the honest wayfarers for which they tried to pass. One of them entered on the pretext of asking the road; others slackened their pace in passing the threshold and stole a look into the room which gave on the courtyard, as if they wished to see without arousing suspicion. At length, towards noon, the tiresome procession ended. Agnese would arise every once in a while, and, crossing the courtyard, would look up and down from the gateway and return to announce that no one was in sight—information which it gave her pleasure to furnish and Lucia to receive, without either of them knowing exactly why. Still an ill-defined disquietude pursued them, making heavy inroads on the supply

of courage which they were holding in reserve for the evening, and particularly on Lucia's.

It is due to the reader to be informed more precisely in regard to these mysterious prowlers; and, in order to enlighten him thoroughly, we must retrace our steps and come back to Don Rodrigo, whom we left alone yesterday at Father Cristoforo's departure in one of the halls of the mansion.

Don Rodrigo, as we have said, was pacing with great strides up and down the length of the room, the walls of which were hung with the family portraits of generation after generation. Upon turning around at the end of the room he would come face to face with a military forbear, the terror of his enemies and of his men. His glance was threatening, his bristling hair was close-cropped, his mustaches, which were long and pointed, flared out beyond the cheeks, and his head was tilted backwards—a right heroic figure as he stood encased in proof armor, greaves, cuishes, cuirass, brassards, gauntlets and all; his right hand against his side and his left grasping the hilt of his sword. Don Rodrigo kept his eyes on it, and then, when he had come up to it, he turned around, and there before him was another forbear —a magistrate this time, the terror of litigants and lawyers, seated upon a great armchair upholstered in red velvet. He was wrapped in a capacious robe of office, all in black with the exception of its white collar with wide lapels and facing of sable. (This was the distinctive senatorial dress and was worn only in winter—which explains why we never find the portrait of a senator in summer costume.) His features were spare; his brows were puckered in a frown. In his hand he held an appeal, and he seemed to be saying to the appellant: "We shall see; the scales of justice are ours." On this side hung a matron, the terror of her serving-maids; on that, an abbot, the terror of his community—a whole race, in fine, given to terrorizing, and exciting terror still from the canvas. In the presence of such memories Don Rodrigo's wrath and mortification increased that a friar should have dared to arraign him with the magisterial airs of a Nathan, and peace fled his mind. He would conjure up a plan of revenging himself, then abandon it, then study some means

to satisfy both his licentiousness and what he was pleased to call his honor; and at certain moments (only fancy!) hearing the words of that interrupted prophecy hissing in his ears, he felt goose-flesh, as we call it, break out all over him, and was on the brink of putting away the thought of the one satisfaction and the other. Finally, to be doing something, he summoned a servant and ordered him to make his excuses to the guests, saying that he was detained by an urgent matter. When the latter returned to report that those gentlemen had all departed, leaving their respects, "And Count Attilio?" inquired Don Rodrigo, without ever interrupting his walking.

"He has gone along with them, my lord."

"Very well, six followers; I go a-walking—quick. My sword, my cloak and hat; hurry."

The servant retired, bowing in reply, and returned with a richly mounted sword, which the master buckled on, a cloak, which he flung across his shoulders, and a bonnet with long plumes, which he clapped on his head fiercely—a sign of stormy weather. He started off, and at the gate found his six blackguards, all armed, who lined up to let him pass, bowed and followed in his train. Passing out, he bent his steps towards Lecco, more surly, more haughty and contemptuous than ordinarily. The peasants and workmen at his approach withdrew into the recesses of the wall, doffing their caps and making reverences, to which he returned no reply. He was bowed to also by those whom the peasantry looked up to as nobility, because there was no one in the whole country-side who even remotely began to vie with him in name, in wealth, in connections or in the desire to exalt himself by such means above others. Towards these he affected a perfunctory condescension. That day it did not happen, but when it did happen that he met the Spanish lord-commandant, the bows were equally profound on either side. It was with them as with two potentates who have no dealings with each other, but for convenience sake do honor each to the other's rank. To beguile away his ill humor and substitute for the image of the friar, which continued to haunt his imagination, other images of a very different order, Don Rodrigo that day

went to a house where much company was generally to be met and where he was received with that assiduous, respectful cordiality which is the portion of those men who are either much loved or much feared, and returned to his mansion only after the night had already fallen. As Count Attilio had also just come back, dinner was served, during which Don Rodrigo remained absorbed in thought and very reticent.

"Cousin, when wilt thou pay the forfeit?" Count Attilio said, in his gibing, tantalizing way, the moment the cloth was removed and the servants were gone.

"Martinmas is not yet gone by."

"The more reason for your paying it at once, because all the saints' days of the calendar will go by before——"

"That is what remains to be seen."

"A very diplomatic reply, coz; but I have seen through it all, and, so sure am I of having won the wager, that I am ready to lay another."

"What is that?"

"That Father—Father What's-his-name hath converted thee."

"More of thy crack-brained fancies."

"Converted, coz; converted, I tell thee. For my own part, I am delighted. 'Twill be a rare sight to see you going about with downcast eyes and a long face. And what a triumph for the holy father! How his breast must have swelled on the way back home! 'Tis not every day that such game is caught; nor with every bait. Rest assured you will make a shining example for him, one that he will be quoting on his more remote missions. Methinks I hear him now." Here he started to drawl through his nose, and, sawing the air with his hands, continued in the tone of a preacher: "In a certain corner of the world, which considerations of respect forbid me to mention, there lived, my brethren, and liveth still, a certain profligate cavalier given up to the attractions of female society rather than that of respectable men. Now this man, considering all fish that came to his net, had his eyes upon——"

"A truce, a truce!" interrupted Don Rodrigo, his laughter

qualified somewhat by irritation. "If you wish to double the stakes, I am willing."

"What, the foul fiend! Have you, then, converted the friar?"

"Don't speak to me of him; and as to the bet, Martinmas shall decide."

The count's curiosity was piqued. He plied Don Rodrigo with questions, which the latter, being loath to communicate to his opponent plans that were not yet under weigh or even fully formed, managed to evade, referring the issue to the day of the decision.

On the following morning Don Rodrigo awoke, once more himself. The trepidation which that "The day shall come" had excited in his breast had vanished entirely with the dreams of night, leaving only rage behind, and that aggravated by mortification at his passing weakness. The more recent impressions of his triumphal promenade, of the obeisances and effusive welcomings which attended it and of his cousin's banter, had contributed not a little towards reviving his old-time spirit. No sooner had he risen than he summoned Griso. "Some undertaking with a stomach to it," reflected the serving-man who carried the message; for the individual who bore this sobriquet was no other than the leader of the bravos, the master's most trusty agent and the instrument of his most villainous and dangerous enterprises—in fact, his absolute creature, bound to his service both by gratitude and self-interest. He had fled for protection to Don Rodrigo after killing a man in broad daylight on the street, and Don Rodrigo had invested him with his livery and thus made him safe from the pursuit of justice. Thus, by pledging himself to every crime that his protector might order, he had insured impunity for the first. For Don Rodrigo the acquisition was of no slight importance, because Griso, besides outranking all his fellows in puissance, was a living proof of his master's ability to defy the law, so that the reputation of his power grew apace and, with the reputation, the reality.

"Griso!" said Don Rodrigo, "this is a juncture that will prove your mettle. This Lucia must be in the palace before tomorrow."

"It shall never be said that Griso recoiled before a command of your illustrious lordship."

"Take as many men as your needs may require. Issue orders and make dispositions as you see fit. But above all, see to it that no harm cometh to her."

"A few tremors, my lord, so that she will not make too great an outcry."

"Fear, yes; that is inevitable. But harm not a hair of her head. And above all else, respect her person. Have you understood?"

"Your lordship, to pluck the rose from its stem and bring it to your excellency, we must needs touch it. But further than what is required no man shall venture."

"As you value my protection. And how will you proceed?"

"I have been giving some thought to it, your lordship. By a lucky chance the house is on the edge of the village. We need a base of operations. Now, just as if to meet our purpose, there is an unoccupied hut standing by itself a short distance off in the field, that house— But your lordship would know naught of such matters—a house that burnt down a few years agone and has not been repaired for lack of funds, so that now it hath no tenants save witches. The day is not the sabbath, and I scout them; but these poor louts, who are chock-full of superstition, would not set foot there on any night of the week for all the gold in the world. So we can take up our position there without running any chances of intruders coming to mar our work."

"Good! And then?"

Here they fell to, Griso with suggestions and Don Rodrigo with criticisms, until, between them, they had worked out a way of bringing the enterprise to a successful termination and of covering up the traces of their handiwork—nay more, of diverting suspicion elsewhere by spurious trains of evidence, of imposing silence on poor Agnese and striking such terror into Renzo as to drive out of his mind, with his grief, all thought of recourse to justice and all inclination to lodge even a complaint. All these and as many more rascalities as were necessary to make their principal rascality succeed. We shall omit the details of their

interview, because, as the reader perceives, they are not necessary for the understanding of this history, and we ourselves are well content that we do not have to bore him with the deliberations of two such arrant knaves. Suffice it to say that, as Griso was departing to execute their plans, Don Rodrigo called him back, saying: "Hold! If that hot-headed young bumpkin should put himself in your way this evening, it would not be amiss to give him a good basting by anticipation. It will give greater effect to the injunction that he is to receive tomorrow to hold his tongue. But go not out of your way to seek him for fear of compromising the main business. Have you understood?"

"Leave it to me," replied Griso with a bow that paid homage as much to his own importance as to his master's authority, and then retired. The morning was spent in reconnoitring the country. The sham mendicant who had invaded the privacy of the humble cottage in the way that has been described was none other than Griso, who had come to take a mental photograph of its arrangement; and the pretended wayfarers were his myrmidons, who, as they were to play a subordinate part, needed a less thorough acquaintance with the scene. Their survey completed, they had not shown themselves any more, for fear of exciting suspicion.

Returning to the castle, Griso made his report and settled definitely on his plan of campaign, assigned to each the part he was to play and issued his instructions. All this could not take place without some inkling coming to the old serving-man, who kept eyes and ears wide open, that something unusual was afoot. By dint of watchfulness and inquiry he made such good use of his opportunities, piecing together shreds of information dropped here and there, puzzling out some cryptic remark and grasping at the bearing of mysterious errands, that at length the secret of the evening's project stood revealed to him. But by the time he had reached a solution of the mystery, night was near at hand, and already a small vanguard of bravos had proceeded to their ambuscade in the dilapidated dwelling. The poor old man, not wishing to fail of his engagement, though he understood well what a dangerous hand he was playing and misdoubted that

it was but a tardy relief he was bearing, excused himself under pretext of going out to take the air and set off post-haste for the monastery to bring Father Cristoforo the word he had promised to convey. Shortly after, the other bravos got under weigh, departing separately, so as not to appear a united force. Griso followed next, leaving behind only the litter, which was to be brought to the haunted house after nightfall, as was done. On reaching the rendezvous, Griso dispatched three of the company to the village inn; one, to stand at the entrance to observe what went on in the street and to note when the inhabitants retired; the others, to remain playing and drinking within doors, as if passing away the time, not neglecting in the meanwhile to play the detective if anything occurred to warrant it. He himself, with the main body of his forces, remained waiting in ambush.

The old serving-man was still hurrying on his way and the three scouts were just arriving at their post, as Renzo at sunset entered Agnese's cottage, saying: "Tonio and Gervaso await without. I shall go with them to the inn for a little supper, and at the Ave Maria we shall come for you. Pluck up your spirits, Lucia. All hangs on an instant." Lucia responded, sighing, to the sentiment, but her voice belied the courageousness of her words.

When Renzo and his two companions arrived at the inn, they found Griso's sentinel already at his post, his hulk filling up half the doorway as he stood leaning back against one of its jambs with his arms folded across his breast. He kept looking repeatedly from right to left, showing, as he did so, the lustrous white or the lustrous black of a pair of griffin-like eyes. A flat cap of crimson velvet, placed awry, half covered his tuft, which was parted over his swarthy forehead and then brought around on either side under the ears to the nape of the neck, where the ends of the locks were held together by a comb. A large cudgel hung in his hand. Of weapons proper, he had none in sight, but even a child would suspect, to look at his face, that he must have had as many concealed about him as would fit under his clothes. When Renzo, who walked first, was on the point of entering, the other, without troubling to budge, eyed him fixedly: but the

youth, anxious to avoid all friction (as those with delicate undertakings in hand always are), took no notice of it nor even asked him to make way, but by flattening himself against the other door-post, edged sideways through the space left open by the huge caryatid. His two companions must needs execute the same evolution or remain without. Once within, they saw the rest of the company, the sound of whose voices had already reached them, that is to say, the other two ruffians, who were seated at a corner of the table playing at *mora*[1] and bawling out both together. (In this case, though, the game calls for it.) A large measure of wine stood between them, from which now one, now the other, would replenish the glasses. These also stared at the newcomers. One of them in particular, his hand still posed aloft with its three fingers extended and his mouth yet unclosed after emitting a prodigious "Six," surveyed Renzo from head to foot and then gave one wink to his boon companion and another to the figure on the threshold, who answered by a nod of the head. Renzo, puzzled and suspicious, looked up into the faces of his two guests as if to read there the explanation of these signs; but they were innocent of any other indications than those of a hearty appetite. The host kept regarding him as if awaiting his order. He drew him into an adjoining room and bespoke supper.

"Who are those strangers?" he then asked in a subdued voice, as the landlord returned with a coarse tablecloth under his arm and a decanter in his hand.

"I don't know them," replied the latter, laying the cloth.

"What! not even one?"

[1] [This noisy Italian game, which the casual Roman visitor is apt to mistake for a violent altercation in some otherwise peaceable *trattoria* or market-place, is said to be as old as the pyramids. "Two persons place themselves opposite each other, holding their right hands closed before them. They then simultaneously and with a sudden gesture throw out their hands, some of the fingers being extended and others shut up on the palm, each calling out in a loud voice, at the same moment, the number he guesses the fingers extended by himself and his adversary to make. If neither cries out aright, or if both cry out aright, nothing is gained or lost; but, if only one guesses the true number, he wins a point." W. W. Story, Roba di Roma, Chapman and Hall, London, 1866, pp. 118–119.—TRANSLATOR.]

"You must remember," he again replied, as he smoothed the cloth on the table, "that the first rule of our business is to ask no questions about other people's affairs. Even our wives have got the better of their curiosity. 'Twould work mischief. So many people always going and coming—like a seaport— When the crops are half-way good, of course. But let us not lose heart; good times will come again— Enough for us that customers are honest folk. Who they are or who they are not boots nothing. And now you'll have such a dish of *polpette* as never before passed your lips."

"How can you tell—?" Renzo started to rejoin; but the innkeeper, who had already turned his steps towards the kitchen, kept on his way. As he was taking the crock with the aforesaid *polpette* from the fire, he was stealthily approached by that one of the bravos who had surveyed our young friend so intently. "Who are those good people?" he asked in an undertone.

"Honest folk of the place," responded the host, turning the *polpette* out into a dish.

"Yes, but who are they? What are their names?" insisted the other in a right surly tone.

"One of them is named Renzo," replied the host, also in an undertone; "a good, steady young fellow. He is a silk-spinner, and one who knows his craft. The other is a peasant named Tonio. He is jolly company, and the only pity is that he hath not morè to spend, for 'twould all find its way here. The third is a simpleton, who eats none the less heartily for that when 'tis offered him. By your leave."

And with a skip, off he went betwixt his interlocutor and the hearth, bearing the dish to its destination. "How can you tell," Renzo returned, when he saw him reappear, "that they are honest folk, if you know not who they be?"

"By their behavior, my dear friend. Men are known by their behavior. If so be they drink their wine without abusing it and pay their score without haggling, if they seek not to draw other customers into a brawl, and, when there is blood to let, they wait for their man outside the inn, and far enough away

that the poor landlord will not smoke for it, d'ye see? then I say they be honest folk. Howsoever, if people could be well acquainted,—like us four here,—so much the better. And whence, in the de'il's name, comes this itching to know so many things, when you are a bridegroom and should have your head filled with other thoughts? And with those *polpette* before you, which would make a corpse fall to." So saying, he returned to the kitchen.

Our author, commenting upon this unequal way of satisfying inquiries, says that the inn-keeper was so constituted that, while he made great profession in theory of being on the side of honest folk, in practice he showed much more deference to such as bore the reputation or appearance of rascals. A singular character, was he not?

The supper was not a remarkably jolly one. The two guests would fain have given themselves up to its enjoyment at their leisure, but their host, preoccupied for reasons with which the reader is acquainted, annoyed about the odd demeanor of the strangers and also somewhat worried, was on tenter-hooks to be starting. The conversation was carried on in an undertone, to prevent its being overheard, and in the briefest phrases, as if the speakers begrudged their words.

"What a lark," Gervaso suddenly blurted out, "that Renzo wants to marry and needs—!" Renzo looked daggers. "Hold your tongue, you thrice-sodden ass," said Tonio to him, accompanying the appellation with a nudge. The conversation lagged more and more until the end. Renzo, while setting a poor pace himself in the matter of drinking as well as of eating, did not fail to ply his witnesses with the wine—discreetly, so as to stiffen their courage without muddling their brain. The cloth being removed and the reckoning paid by the poorest trencherman of the three, they had to pass anew in front of the gorgons in the next room, who fixed their gaze upon Renzo as when he had entered. He paused, after taking a few steps from the inn, and, on turning around, saw he was being followed by the two he had left sitting in the kitchen. He and his companions there-

upon stopped full, as if determined to know what was wanted of him; but the others, upon perceiving that they were observed, also stopped, exchanged some words in an undertone, and turned back. Had Renzo been close enough to catch their words, they would have appeared to him strange indeed. "It would have been a high feather in our cap just the same (to say nothing of the perquisite)," one of the blackguards was telling his partner, "if, upon our return to the palace, we could have it to say that we had given him a good rib-roasting at the cost of so few seconds, and thus by ourselves, without Griso's being by to lay out the work."

"And thus mar the main business," replied the other. "Look! he smells a rat; he has stopped to observe us. Gr-r-r! if it were only later! Let us turn back to disarm suspicion. See, people are coming from every direction; we shall let them all go to roost."

One perceived, in fact, that buzz and stir which characterize the twilight hour in a village and which after a few minutes give way to the solemn stillness of night. Women were returning from the fields carrying infants on their breasts and leading the elder children, who repeated their evening devotions as they went. Men trudged along with spade and hoe thrown across the shoulder. As they entered their homes, the gleam of fires, lighted to prepare the frugal supper, shone here and there through the open doorways; the sound of "Good-nights" being exchanged was heard in the street, together with an occasional observation about the light harvest and the bad year; and, like an overtone to the chorus of human voices, boomed out the measured strokes of the church bell, tolling the knell of parting day. When Renzo saw that his two annoyers had given ground, he pursued his way in the gathering darkness, serving muttered reminders now on one, now on another of the brothers. It was night by the time they arrived at Lucia's cottage.

It has been remarked by a barbarian who was not without some claims to genius, that

"Between the acting of a dreadful thing
And the first motion, all the interim is
Like a phantasma or a hideous dream."[2]

Lucia had for some hours now been in the horrid delirium of such a dream, and Agnese—even Agnese, the author of the scheme—remained pensive and could hardly find words to animate Lucia's courage. But when the time has actually arrived and hand is to be set to work, a complete change comes over the soul. Where the heart trembled before it is now staunch, and where it was staunch it trembles. The undertaking looms up before the mind's eye like a new apparition. That which at first alarmed us most, often seems to become suddenly practicable, and we see great obstacles in circumstances which seemed not worth consideration. The imagination cowers in the extremity of its terror; the members refuse to obey, and the heart turns recreant to promises it made with never a misgiving. At Renzo's muffled rap on the door Lucia was seized with such terror that she then and there resolved that, rather than go through with their plans, she would suffer anything, even life-long estrangement from her lover; but, when he had made his appearance with the greeting: "I am ready, let us be going"; when they all seemed prepared to go ahead without hesitation, as if

[2] [The "barbarian who was not without some claims to genius" is, of course, Shakespeare, the lines being taken from "Julius Caesar," Act II, Scene I. Manzoni was arraigned, as a result of this allusion, for irreverence towards the master by the Rev. Charles Swan, an Anglican clergyman, resident in Italy, who published the first English translation of "I Promessi Sposi" in Pavia one year after the appearance of the original, or in 1828. His reprimand had the merit, if not of showing great perspicacity on the part of the objector, at least of eliciting one of the most interesting letters in Manzoni's "Correspondence." In the course of it he explains that the expression is Voltaire's (who, as a matter of fact, wrote in the preface to his "Semiramide" that "Hamlet" might well be taken for the work of some drunken savage), and that he intended his repetition of the expression to be obviously ironical; that his admiration for Shakespeare was so notorious that he presumed on his reader's knowledge of it in interpreting—if that were necessary—the passage; and that, finally, his real opinion on the subject might be learned by a perusal of his "Letter to Chauvet" on the dramatic unities. Carteggio di Alessandro Manzoni, vol. II, pp. 395 ff.—TRANSLATOR.]

their course were settled and irrevocable, Lucia had neither the time nor the strength to demur, but, trembling and almost bereft of the power of locomotion, took one arm of her mother's and another of her affianced husband's and started off with the little band of adventurers.

Softly and without hurrying their pace, they stole out of the house into the darkness and took the road leading from the village. The shorter way lay through the village, running as it did straight to Don Abbondio's house; but they chose the other, so as not to be seen. Faring along unfrequented ways, between gardens and meadows, they reached a point hard by the rectory, where they separated. The two lovers concealed themselves behind the corner of the house with Agnese, who, however, kept a little in advance of them so as to be in time to catch Perpetua and bear her off. Tonio with his lack-wit of a brother, who, though an essential factor in their scheme, was helpless as an infant when left by himself, went boldly up to the door and knocked.

"Who is there at such an hour as this?" demanded a shrill voice from the window, which had just been thrown open. The voice was Perpetua's. "There's none sick that I know of. Hath there been an accident?"

"It is I," replied Tonio, "together with my brother. We must talk with his reverence."

"At such a godless hour, you jackanapes!" brusquely retorted Perpetua. "Get you home and return tomorrow."

"One moment! I may return, and I may not. I have come by a trifle of money and I was going to pay off that pest of a debt that you know of with twenty-five brand-new *berlinghe* which I have here in my pocket; but, since that cannot be, then heigh-ho! they'll fatten someone else's purse, and, when I've hoarded as many more, I'll come again."

"Stay, stay! I'll be back directly. But why such an hour as this?"

" 'Tis not long since I got them myself, and I thought, as I say, that, if I slept on it, I might be of another mind on the morrow. Still, if the hour be not to your liking, it is not for

me to persist. As for myself, here I am; but, if I am not wanted, I shall be off."

"No, no! Stay a moment. I'll be back with a reply."

So saying, she closed the window. At this juncture Agnese parted company with the lovers, saying in an undertone to Lucia: "Have courage; one moment and it is all over, like pulling a tooth." Then she joined the brothers at the doorway and started chatting with Tonio, so that Perpetua, on coming to open the door, would think that she had happened along by accident and that Tonio had detained her for a minute.

Chapter VIII

"Carneades! Who was he?" Don Abbondio was pondering, as, with a book opened up before him, he sat in his great chair in a room of the upper floor, when Perpetua entered on her embassy. "Carneades! I seem to have read or heard of that name somewhere. He must have been some scholar, a blue-stocking of antiquity—his name hath the ring of it. But who the foul fiend was he?"—So far was he from foreseeing the storm which was gathering about his head.

The reader should know that Don Abbondio diverted himself with reading a little each day, and a neighboring pastor who possessed a small library used to lend him one book after another —the first that came to hand. The one over which Don Abbondio was then poring (during his convalescence from the fever which his fear had precipitated and from which—I mean the fever, not the fear—he was more nearly recovered than he would admit) was a panegyric on St. Charles, which had been pronounced with as much energy as it had been received with admiration two years before in the cathedral of Milan. The saint was therein compared, for love of study, to Archimedes; and thus far Don Abbondio was not greatly embarrassed, because Archimedes' achievements are of such a curious order and of such common notoriety that it requires no vast erudition to know something of them. But, after Archimedes, the orator went on to institute a parallel with Carneades; and here the reader was hopelessly marooned. It was at this moment that Perpetua entered to announce Tonio's visit.

"At such an hour?" quoth Don Abbondio also, as was natural enough.

"What is there to do? They lack all sense of propriety; but a bird in the hand——"

"To be sure. Unless I take it now, Heaven knows when I shall get it.—Hold! are you positive it is really he?"

"Pish!" replied Perpetua, starting off. "Where are you?" she asked, as she opened the door. Tonio came forward, and at the same time Agnese appeared, bidding Perpetua a good-even by name.

"Good-evening, Agnese. And whence are you bound at such an hour?"

"I'm coming from ——" naming a near-by hamlet. "And if you only knew—" she continued. " 'Tis for your sake, moreover, that I stopped."

"Oh! Why?" asked Perpetua; and, turning to the brothers, "Go in," she said, "and I'll be in after you."

"Because," Agnese responded, "one of those would-be oracles that get hold of the wrong end of everything would have it (just fancy!) that the reason you did not marry Beppe Suolavecchia or Anselmo Lunghigna was that they refused to have you. I claimed that it was you who had refused them, both of them——"

"Certainly I did. Oh, the false hussy, the lying vixen! Who was it?"

"Nay, ask me not. I do not wish to make bad blood."

"You shall tell me, you must tell me. Oh, the detractor!"

"Prithee! But you cannot imagine how vexed I was at not having the whole story, that I might have put her down."

"How can folks ever invent such stories!" exclaimed Perpetua anew; but she resumed immediately: "As for Beppe, it was plain to be seen, and everyone knows— Ho! there, Tonio, draw the door to, and go upstairs. I am coming." Tonio acquiesced from within, and Perpetua continued her impassioned narrative.

Opposite Don Abbondio's doorway stood two small tumble-down houses, and between them a lane opened into the fields beyond. Agnese bent her steps in this direction, as if withdrawing somewhat for greater freedom, and Perpetua followed. When they had turned a corner and were in a position whence it was impossible to see what took place in front of Don Abbondio's, Agnese gave a loud cough. It was the signal. Renzo heard it, and, pressing Lucia's arm to reassure her, he

and she stole ahead, walking on tiptoe and grazing against the wall. On arriving at the entrance, they pushed open the door noiselessly, and, crouching down, crept silently into the passage-way, where the two brothers awaited them. Renzo closed the door again without making the faintest sound, and together they mounted the stairs, but so lightly that it might have been one instead of four. Once at the top, the brothers approached the door, which opened to one side of the landing. The two lovers huddled close to the wall.

"Deo gratias," said Tonio in a good clear voice.

"Tonio, eh? Come in," replied a voice inside.

Thus invited, Tonio opened the door, but barely wide enough for himself and Gervaso to pass one at a time. The light, suddenly flooding through this opening and forming a bright pathway across the dark landing, caused Lucia to start as if she had been discovered. Tonio drew the door after him, and the lovers remained motionless, with ears strained and bated breath, in the shadow. The loudest noise was made by the beating of poor Lucia's heart.

Don Abbondio was seated, as we have said, in an old arm-chair, with a shabby cloak gathered about him and on his head a well-worn skull-cap, which by the indistinct light of a small lamp gave his face the appearance of being in a frame. Two shaggy locks escaped from under his cap, and the general effect of their hoary whiteness against the swart, wrinkled visage, with its shaggy eyebrows, shaggy mustaches and chin-tuft, all silvered alike by age, was somewhat like those snow-covered clumps of bushes that one may see hanging against the face of a cliff in the moonlight.

"Huh!" was the salutation with which he greeted them, as he took off his glasses and put them into his book.

"Your reverence will say that I came late," said Tonio with a bow, whose awkwardness was exaggerated in Gervaso's imitation of it.

"Indeed, it is late—late in every sense of the word. Knew you not that I am ill?"

"Oh! I am sorry, in good sooth."

"You must needs have heard some rumors of it. I am ill and know not when I can see people— But why are you lugging that—that lad there after you?"

"For company, your reverence."

"Well, well; let us not waste time."

"Here be the twenty-five fire-new *berlinghe*—you know—with St. Ambrose on horseback," said Tonio, drawing a purse from his pocket.

"Let us see," responded Don Abbondio, taking the purse into his hands. Then, resuming his glasses, he undid the string and took out the coins, which, after counting and turning over and over again, he found to be quite unexceptionable.

"Now your reverence will give me back Tecla's necklace."

"Right enough," replied Don Abbondio. Then, going to a cabinet and looking round him as he drew the key from his pocket, as if bidding onlookers to keep their distance, he partially opened one of the doors, thrusting his body into the aperture, and poked his head into the interior to look for the necklace. He then reached in for it, and having closed the cabinet, gave Tonio his property, saying: "Is everything all right?"

"Now," said Tonio, "if you will be good enough to put it down in black and white."

"That too!" said Don Abbondio. " 'Tis a knowing swain. Faugh! how suspicious the world is becoming! Don't you trust me?"

"Not trust your reverence? You do me wrong. But since my name is already on the wrong side of your books— That is, since you have not found it irksome to write it out once, perhaps— We're here today and in our graves tomorrow, you know."

"Very well, very well," interrupted Don Abbondio, and grumblingly pulled out a drawer of his desk from which he brought forth pen, ink and paper, and started to write, repeating each word aloud as he formed it with his pen. Meanwhile, Tonio and, at a gesture from him, Gervaso, took their stand in front of the desk in such a manner as to obstruct the writer's view of the doorway and set to scraping the floor with his feet, idly

it would appear, but in reality to give the couple outside a signal to enter, and, at the same time, to cover up the noise of their footfalls. Don Abbondio, absorbed in his writing, had no attention left for aught else. At the sound of the scraping Renzo took Lucia's arm, giving it another reassuring squeeze, and started in, drawing her along with him. She trembled so that of herself she would never have been able to budge. They glided in on tiptoe, not even breathing as they went, and hid behind the brothers. Don Abbondio had finished writing in the meantime, and without raising his eyes from the paper, started to read it over. He then folded it double, saying: "Now are you satisfied?" And, taking off his glasses with one hand and handing the receipt to Tonio with the other, he looked up. Tonio, at the same time that he reached out for the document, stepped to one side, Gervaso, at a direction from him, stepped to the other, and in the middle, as if a stage-setting had suddenly opened up, stood Renzo and Lucia.

Don Abbondio at first saw the proceeding as if in a dream. Then fear, dismay and rage followed one another in quick succession. Finally, collecting his wits, he hit on a plan of action—all this in the time it took Renzo to say: "Your reverence, in the presence of these witnesses, this is my wife." Hardly had the words left his lips, when Don Abbondio, dropping the receipt from his fingers and seizing the lamp with his left hand, grabbed off the desk-cover with his right, scattering book, paper, ink and blotting-sand all over the floor in his mad haste, and made a bound between the desk and the armchair towards Lucia. The poor maid, in accents mild as always, but now trembling besides, was just beginning: "And this—" when Don Abbondio unceremoniously clapped the desk-cover over her head and face so as to hinder her from completing the formula. Another instant, and, having dropped the lamp, the left hand was assisting in the operation of making a muffler out of the desk-cover, with the result that she was well-nigh stifled. In the meantime he never ceased screaming at the pitch of his voice: "Perpetua! Perpetua! Treason! Help!" The wick, which was flickering out its last on the floor, cast a pale wavering light on Lucia, who stood in

a daze, not even making a move to disengage herself—not unlike a sculptor's clay model over which he has thrown a dampened cloth. When the last glimmer had expired, Don Abbondio left the distraught maiden to herself and felt his way to the door of an adjoining chamber, in which he locked himself, screaming without intermission: "Perpetua! Treason! Help! Out of my house! out of my house!" In the first room all was confusion. Renzo was seeking to intercept the priest, and, groping about as if he were playing at blindman's-buff, he at last found the door, and, rapping on it, cried: "Open up! open up! Cease your outcry!" Lucia was adjuring Renzo in a voice husky with terror to come away by all that was holy. Tonio was down on all fours, scouring the floor for the lost receipt. Gervaso, frightened out of his wits, danced about, screaming like one possessed and searching for the stair-door to flee for safety.

In the midst of all this hurly-burly we cannot forbear pausing an instant to make a reflection. Renzo, who has raised all this nocturnal racket in the house of another, who gained an entrance surreptitiously and is now besieging the master of the house himself in one of his rooms, has all the appearance of an aggressor; still, in the last analysis, he is the oppressed. Don Abbondio, waylaid and put to flight in terror while he was peaceably minding his own business, seems to be the victim; still, in reality, it is he who was guilty of oppression. This is often the way things go in the world—I mean to say, the way they went in the seventeenth century.

The beleaguered, seeing that the enemy gave no sign of raising the siege, opened the window giving on the church-square and set up a yelling for help. The moon shone brightly. The shadow of the church, and farther on, the long, pointed shadow of the steeple, stood out dark and clear-cut against the glistening lawn of the square. One could distinguish every object almost as clearly as by day. But as far as the eye could reach there was no sign of a living person. Under the wall of the church, however, on that side which faced the parochial residence, stood a small abode hardly larger than a kennel, where the sacristan slept. He was aroused by the unconscionable screaming, and,

leaping from his bed, he thrust his head out of the window with his eyes still glued together and asked the cause of the pother.

"Come quick, Ambrogio! Help! People in the house!" Don Abbondio hallooed across to him. "At once," he replied, and, drawing in his head, closed the window. Though half-asleep and something more than half-scared, he bethought himself on the spur of the moment of an expedient to give more help than was desired without involving himself in the fray, whatever might be its nature. Grabbing up his breeches, which lay upon the bed, and tucking them under his arm as one might a dress-hat, he tore down the narrow stairs and made for the belfry, where he seized the rope of the larger of a pair of bells and started pealing out an alarm.

Dong! dong! dong! dong! Up spring the peasants in their beds. The younger men in their lofts strain their ears and jump to their feet. "What is it? What is it? The alarm bell? Fire? —thieves?—bandits?—which?"

Wives entreat their husbands to stay in bed and let the others do the gadding. As for the men, some rise and go to the window; the cowardly to come back and get between the sheets, as if in answer to their wives' entreaties; the more courageous or the more curious to go below and, arming themselves with pitchforks or muskets, to hurry off to the summons. Some simply wait for developments.

But before this volunteer host was in motion, indeed before they were well awake, the noise had reached the ears of other persons not far away who were on their feet and dressed—the bravos in one quarter, and Agnese and Perpetua in another. Let us describe briefly the doings of the former from the moment when we left them, some in the abandoned dwelling, some at the inn. The three latter, when they saw the doors all closed and the street deserted, hurried off as if they had only just adverted to the lateness of the hour, saying that they must be going home. They took a turn through the village to ascertain whether all had retired. Not a living soul was to be met with; not the faintest noise reached their ears. With furtive steps they passed by Agnese's poor cottage: it was the quietest of

all, being empty. Then straight to the abandoned dwelling, where they made their report to Griso. This gentleman immediately arrayed himself in a palmer's cloak of waxed cloth strewn with cockle-shells, took a pilgrim's staff in his hand, placed on his head an unsightly old hat, and saying, "Come, lads, let us to it bravely—no talking and look to your commands," he led off the expedition.

Within a few moments they were at the cottage, having followed a direction opposite to that which our little party took in starting forth on their own expedition. Griso halted his band some paces off and went forward alone to reconnoitre. Finding all still and deserted without, he summoned two of his ruffians and ordered them to scale the garden-wall noiselessly and hide in a corner behind a thick-leafed fig-tree on which his eye had lighted that morning. This done, he gave a subdued rap at the gate, intending to say that he was a pilgrim who had lost his way and to ask shelter till morning. On receiving no answer, he knocked again a little louder. Not a sound comes from within. Thereupon he goes after a third member of his rascally crew and makes him scale the wall in the same manner as the other two, with orders to unscrew the latch gently, so as to leave a free passage in and out; all of which is carried out with the utmost caution and the most gratifying success. Then, summoning the rest, he takes them along in and sends them off to hide with the first, afterwards stealthily closing the gate and posting two sentinels on the inside. He now goes straight to the house-door and knocks once more. Again he waits—as well he may. This door, in turn, is noiselessly taken off its hinges, and still not a word of challenge nor a sign of life from within. What more could be wished for? On, on, then, Griso; there is not a minute to lose. "Hist!" he calls to those under the fig-tree, and with them enters the room on the ground floor, where he had that morning fraudulently begged an alms of bread. Then, producing flint, steel, tinder and sulphur splints, he lights a small lantern and looks about an adjoining room to make sure that no one is there. It is empty. He next goes to the stair-door and peers up, straining his ear for the faintest sound. The soli-

tude and silence are unbroken. Leaving two more sentinels below, he chooses for his immediate partner a bravo named Grignapoco from the state of Bergamo, who was to make all threats, do all the coaxing, issue all commands—who, in fact, was to be sole spokesman, to the end that Agnese might be induced to believe that the expedition came from those parts.

With him at his shoulder and the others in his wake, Griso creeps slowly up the stairs, cursing in his heart every step that creaks and every noise that one of the cutthroats behind him makes with his feet. At length the top is reached. Here, at last, lies the quarry. Gently he tries the door leading into the first room—it gives. He looks in through the crack, but everything is dark; he applies his ear to listen for some sound of snoring or breathing or some rustling of the bed, but all within is silent as the tomb. On, then, Griso; it is but one step more. Holding the lantern up before his face, so as to see without being seen in turn, he throws the door wide open and rushes towards the bed. It is untouched! The coverlet is still unruffled, with the end folded back neatly over the bolster. With a shrug of the shoulders he turns towards his crew and indicates by a gesture that he is going to look in the other room and that they are to follow without making any noise. There, he goes through the same routine and finds the same state of affairs. "What the foul fiend is the meaning of this?" he says. "Has some dog of a traitor turned informer?" Thereupon, with caution much abated, they all set themselves to ransacking the whole house, ferreting in every nook and corner and turning the place topsy-turvy.

While this part of the band were thus occupied, the pair who were on guard at the street gate heard the sudden patter of childish footsteps hastening towards them. Fancying that whoever it was would pass by, they kept perfectly still and, for caution's sake, keenly on the alert. They were justified in the event, for the steps stopped just at the gate. It was Menico running back home from Father Cristoforo with a solemn adjuration to Lucia and her mother to flee their home without delay and take refuge in the monastery for the reason—for the reason

which the reader already knows. He took hold of the latch-pin to use it in lieu of a knocker and felt the bolt dangle idly in his hand. "What is this?" he thought, fearfully pushing the gate, which opened to his touch. He stepped inside with great misgivings. On the instant he felt himself seized by the shoulders and heard a menacing voice at either side of him say in subdued tones: "Silence, or you die." By way of compliance he let out a vociferous yell. One of the ruffians clapped a hand over his mouth, while the other drew a murderous-looking knife to terrify him. The lad trembled like an aspen-leaf and did not even make an effort to raise his voice again.

But all at once a far more ominous sound than Menico's piping tones arose on the air, as that first awful stroke of the church-bell boomed out, and in its wake a whole ordnance of them in quick succession. Evil-doers are evil-dreaders, as the Milanese proverb says. To each of the two marauders it seemed that the brazen notes of the alarm-bell were spelling out his own name, surname and sobriquet. They released Menico's arms and stood looking at each other, with gaping mouths and fear-benumbed hands, and the next instant dashed into the house to rejoin the main body of the party. Off scampered Menico down the road in the direction of the belfry, where at all events someone would be found. The rest of the scoundrels, who were at that moment ransacking the house from top to bottom, were affected by the terrible clap in the same way as the first two. Panic-stricken, they jostled one against another helter-skelter in a general rush for the exit. Still, not one of them but was a tried man, accustomed to face the enemy; but such an ill-defined danger, bursting on them suddenly like a bolt from the blue, was more than they could stand.

It needed all of Griso's ascendancy to hold them together and save their retreat from becoming a rout. If the reader has ever seen a dog accompanying a herd of swine and watched him as he runs hither and thither after the vagabonds, nosing this one into line, snapping at that one by the ear and barking at a third which starts at the same instant to leave the path, he can easily form a picture of Griso in palmer's attire laying about

him, cuffing back one bravo who had already reached the threshold, stopping the flight of a second and a third with his staff, calling after the others who ran back and forth without knowing which way to turn, until finally he had them all corralled in the middle of the courtyard. "Be quick, now," said he. "Pistols in your hands, knives within reach, and all together, so; and then away. Who will ever raise a hand against you if you stand together, you dolts? But if you let yourselves be set upon one by one, even these louts of peasants will lay you by the heels. Follow me, you poltroons, and keep together." After this brief harangue he placed himself at their head and led them off. The house stood, as we have said, on the edge of the village. Griso took the road leading out into the country, and the others followed after in good order.

Leaving them to pursue their way, let us now return to Agnese and Perpetua, whom we last saw strolling down a certain lane. Agnese had bent her efforts towards drawing the other as far away as possible from Don Abbondio's, and up to a certain point all had gone well. But suddenly the housekeeper bethought herself of the open door, and would fain turn back. To remonstrate was impossible. There was nothing for it but for Agnese to turn back also, so as not to excite suspicion; so, lagging along behind her conductor, she sought to detain her each time that she saw her wax warm on the subject of the frustrated marriages. She made a show of listening spellbound to the narrative and every once in a while, under pretext of interest or to steer the conversation into other channels, she would say: "Why, to be sure, now I understand. Just so. It's clear as daylight. And now as to him? And you?" But all the while she held quite other colloquy with herself: "Are they out yet, or still in the house? What a trio of blockheads we are not to have concerted some signal, to let me know when it is over. 'Twas badly botched; but now the milk is spilled, and there is no help for it but to hold off this magpie as long as possible. At the worst, 'twill be only so much lost time." Thus, walking by fits and starts, they had arrived within a short distance of the house, which, however, could not be seen on account of the bend in

the road of which mention has been made. Perpetua had reached an important point in her narrative and allowed her progress to be checked without demur, and indeed, without adverting to it, when all at once Don Abbondio's first stentorian call for help pierced the unbroken stillness of the slumbering night air.

"God 'a' mercy! What has happened?" cried Perpetua, starting to run.

"What's the matter?" said Agnese, holding her by the skirts.

"God 'a' mercy! Did you not hear?" replied the other, struggling to release herself.

"What is it? what is it?" repeated Agnese, clutching her by the arm.

"Pest of a woman!" exclaimed Perpetua, pushing her aside and setting herself at liberty. She turned to fly, and at the same instant Menico's screams rang out, farther off but shriller and more startled.

"God 'a' mercy on us!" now exclaimed Agnese, darting off after the other. Her heels were barely off the ground when the church-bell crashed out—once, twice, thrice, and many more. They would have been spurs to her flight had any been needed. Perpetua arrived a moment before her companion. As she was on the point of shoving the door, it was thrown open from within, and on the threshold appeared Tonio, Gervaso, Renzo and Lucia, who had come leaping down the stairway once it was found, and, hearing the peal of that terrible bell, were making off in furious haste to reach a place of safety.

"What is it? what is it?" Perpetua breathlessly asked of the two brothers, who pushed her nearly off her feet for reply and scuttled away. "And you! you! what are you doing here?" she then asked of the other pair when she had made them out. But they, too, made their exit without answering. Perpetua, to be on hand where the need was paramount, asked no more questions but hurried into the hall and, making the best of her way through the darkness, ran for the stairs.

The betrothed lovers found themselves facing Agnese, still only betrothed. "Oh, you are here," she said, panting so that she

could hardly speak. "How did it thrive? What means this ringing? Methinks I heard——"

"Get we home, get we home," said Renzo, "before the people come." They were on the point of starting, when Menico dashed up. He recognized them, and, still trembling all over, stayed their flight, saying hoarsely: "Whither would you go? Turn back, turn back! To the monastery! This way."

"Was it you—?" Agnese was beginning.

"What else is amiss?" asked Renzo. Lucia trembled and held her peace in unabated dismay.

"All Bedlam is loose in the house," replied Menico, gasping for breath. "I saw them with my own eyes. They would have murdered me— Father Cristoforo said—for you too, Renzo—that you should come at once— I saw them, so I did. What a mercy I found you all here! I'll tell you the rest when we are out of this."

Renzo, whose head was the clearest of all, was of opinion that it behooved them to make off in one direction or another before the crowd gathered, and that the safest course was to do what Menico advised, nay commanded, with all the insistence of terror. The boy could then be made to explain more coherently when they were on their way and well out of danger. "Walk ahead," he said to him; "and let us accompany him," he said to the two women. Turning their steps towards the church, they hastened across the square, where, providentially, no one was yet to be seen; then down the lane that separated the church from Don Abbondio's house and off through the first gap in the hedge into the fields.

They had advanced not fifty paces, perhaps, when a stream of people began to flow into the church-square, and each moment swelled its volume. They looked into one another's face, each with a question on his lips, none with a reply. The first to arrive rushed to the church-door—it was locked. They then ran to the belfry. One of them, putting his mouth up to a small window, or rather, a kind of embrasure in the wall, roared through, demanding by all the powers of darkness to know what was wrong. When Ambrogio heard a familiar voice, he let go

the bell-rope, and, assured by the murmur outside of a great concourse of people, he replied that he would open the door. Pulling on the gear which he had borne off under his arm, he came through the interior to the portal of the church and opened to the throng.

"What means all this hue-and-cry? What's wrong? Where are we to go? Who is it?"

"What! Who is it?" said Ambrogio, with one hand holding the door open and with the other taking a hitch in the garment which he had donned so hastily. "What! Know you not that there are marauders in the pastor's house? Blithely, my lads; to the rescue!" They turned about at that and swarmed towards the house. They looked up at it, listening for some sound from within; but all was quiet. Some ran around to the front door; it was closed and bore no traces of having been touched. These also looked up at the second story; not a window was open and all was silent as the tomb.

"Halloo! halloo! Who is there? Don Abbondio! Don Abbondio!"

Don Abbondio, who was no sooner assured of the invaders' flight than he drew in his head and closed the window, and was at that instant engaged in a subdued altercation with Perpetua for having left him alone in such an ordeal, had no choice, on hearing the populace clamor for him, but to go to the window once again. When he saw the number who had come to his relief, he repented of summoning them.

"What hath happened? What have they done? Who were they? Where did they go?" were the questions that were put to him by fifty voices at once.

"There is nobody now. I am much beholden to you. Now return to your homes again."

"But who was it? Where have they gone? What befell?"

"People who meant no good—fly-by-nights; but they have decamped. Return to your homes; the danger is over for this time, my sons. Gramercy for your goodness of heart." So saying, he drew in his head and closed the window. Hereupon some set to grumbling and others to jesting, some gave vent to pro-

fanity and still others, shrugging their shoulders, were starting away, when a newcomer arrived, so exhausted that it was with difficulty he could frame his speech coherently. He was a man whose house stood almost opposite to Agnese's, and who from his window, whither he had gone at the sound of the alarm, had seen the confusion of the bravos in the courtyard that Griso was at such pains to control. His first care, on recovering his breath, was to cry out: "What are you doing here, my lads? It's down the street that Old Nick is loose, not here—down at Agnese Mondella's—men armed to the teeth—and inside the house. They seem to be murdering a palmer. The Lord only knoweth what's amiss."

"What? what? what? what?" A stormy consultation ensued. "Let us go," said one. "Let us look into it," said another. "What do they number?" asked one. "What do we number ourselves?" queried a second. "Who are they?" contributed a third. Then, by acclamation, they demanded: "The consul! the consul!"

"I am here," replied the consul from the midst of the crowd; "I am here, but I must have your aid and obedience. Quick! Where is the sacristan? Toll the bell, toll the bell. Quick! A man to run to Lecco for reenforcements. This way, all . . . . ."

Some pressed forward, others were squeezing a way out to take themselves off. The confusion was prodigious, when a man who had seen Griso's band beating such a hasty retreat came upon the scene and screamed: "Come quick, lads. Thieves or bandits, who are carrying off a palmer! They are already outside the village. After them! After them!" At this announcement the mob started off without awaiting any word of command from their captain and rushed down the street pell-mell, some of those at the vanguard gradually dropping back as the army advanced and choking up the ranks of the main body, while those in the rear simultaneously closed in. At length they reached the place designated, a confused and motley throng. The traces of the invasion were fresh and unequivocal, the gate gaping open and its fastenings torn off; but the invaders had disappeared. They entered the courtyard and approached the house entrance;

this door also was unhinged and wide open. "Agnese! Lucia! palmer!" they cried out. "Where's the palmer? Stefano must have been dreaming." "No, no; Carlandrea saw him, too." "Halloo! palmer! Agnese! Lucia!" No reply. "They have been kidnapped," they then told one another.

Some among them thereupon spoke up, proposing to go in pursuit of the kidnappers. It was outrageous, they said, and their village would suffer grave scorn if every rogue in the realm could thus come and carry off their towns-women from under their eyes, as a kite might chicks from an empty threshing-floor. A new and stormier consultation then began; when some one (and it was never well known who) launched the rumor that Agnese and Lucia had taken refuge with some neighbor. The rumor flew rapidly from mouth to mouth and was accepted as the truth. From that on there was no further talk of giving chase to the fugitives; the band dispersed and each wended his way back home. The murmur of voices lingered for a while on the air, and the sound of tramping filled the streets, to be succeeded by a rapping at doors and a hoisting of windows. Women's heads were thrust out inquiringly and men's voices answered from beneath. Lights twinkled, hinges creaked and silence reigned once more in the deserted street. The conversation eddied along within doors for some time still, until it finally died away in yawning.

The next morning saw tongues wagging again, but there was no further incident—except that the consul, while standing in his field with his elbow leaning on the handle of his spade and his foot resting on the blade driven half-way into the clod, and speculating upon the respective merits of the course which his duty prescribed and of that which caution suggested, was approached by two men of burly mien, grisly as the early race of Frankish kings and further remarkable for the striking resemblance they presented to the pair who had accosted Don Abbondio five days previously—if, in fact, they were not the identical pair. With still less ceremony on this occasion they enjoined the consul that he should carefully refrain from making any deposition on the occurrence before the podestà, that he

should dissimulate the truth in case that he happened to be called upon to testify, and that he should neither prattle himself nor encourage the prattling of the villagers, if he laid any store by dying in his bed.

Our fugitives proceeded some distance at a good round pace, looking back by turns to see if any one followed. It was a silent journey. They were all of them overwrought, as well from the stress of their flight and the excitement and suspense to which they had been subjected as from the bitterness of their frustrated hopes and the vague apprehensions raised by this new and dimly defined danger. The inexorable tolling of the church-bell, growing fainter and hollower as they proceeded, but taking on at the same time a strangely ominous and sinister character, contributed no little to their agitation of mind.

The ringing finally ceased. The fugitives happening just then to be in an empty field and hearing not a stir about them, slackened their pace. It was Agnese who first broke the silence. As soon as she had recovered her breath she inquired of Renzo how his affairs had thrived and of Menico what was the nature of the disturbance he had seen in the house. Renzo briefly related his sad tale; whereupon all three turned to the boy. He delivered the monk's admonition in greater detail than before and related the scene he had witnessed and the danger he had run—all of which served to invest the admonition with additional authority and to convey to the listeners a meaning of which the informant himself was innocent. They shuddered at the disclosure, and looking from one to another, they were all three rooted to the spot by a common impulse of horror. Then with one accord they began to shower endearments on Menico, one patting him on the head, another on the shoulders, to express their silent thanks for his having been their guardian-angel, to testify the compassion which they felt for the anguish he had experienced and the perils he had encountered in their defence, and almost to apologize to him for their having been the occasion of his jeopardy. "And now return home," said Agnese, "that your parents may be disquieted about you no longer"; and remembering her promise of the two *parpagliole*, she put her

hand into her pocket and drew out double the number, adding as she gave them to him: "Enough said. Pray God we may soon meet again; and then—" Renzo gave him a bright new *berlinga* and warmly recommended reticence in regard to the friar's commission. Lucia embraced him once more and said good-bye in heart-broken accents.

The lad bade them all farewell, much moved by the demonstrations, and turned back home. They continued on their way, communing sadly with their thoughts, the women going on before and Renzo following behind like a bodyguard. Lucia clung close to her mother and gently but adroitly eluded the arm which the youth proffered her over the rougher parts of their cross-country progress, her modesty beginning to be alarmed, even in the perturbed state of her thoughts, at having been alone with him so long and on such familiar terms in the expectation of shortly becoming his wife. Now that that dream had been so cruelly dissipated, she repented of the lengths to which she had gone, and amid so many other causes for trembling, she trembled also with shame—a shame that arises not from the melancholy knowledge of evil, but springs it knows not whence, like the fears of a child who trembles in the dark without knowing why.

"And what of the house?" of a sudden asked Agnese. No one replied, important though the question was, because no one could think of a satisfactory reply to make. They continued silently upon their way and in a little while came out upon the square that lay in front of the monastery-church.

Renzo mounted the steps and pushed gently against the door. It yielded, and the moonlight streamed in upon the pallid countenance and silvery beard of Father Cristoforo, who was standing there waiting. Upon seeing that no one was missing, "God be praised!" he said, and made them a sign to enter. At his side stood a second Capuchin, the lay brother-sacristan, whom he had prevailed upon by dint of entreaty and argument to leave the door ajar and stand watch to receive the poor refugees; and it had called for all of the friar's ascendancy of character and fame of sanctity to obtain from the brother a compliance at once so irksome, so risky and so irregular. Once they were inside

and Father Cristoforo had softly closed the door behind them, the sacristan could stand it no longer. Calling the old priest to one side, he poured a stream of whispered remonstrances into his ear, shaking his head the while: "But father, father! At night—in the church—with women—and the doors closed— But, father! our rule—" "See now," thought Father Cristoforo as the other was stammering out these objections, "if it were some roisterer making good his escape, Fra Fazio would find no difficulty in the world; and the sight of innocence fleeing from the fangs of the wolf does not—" *"Omnia munda mundis,"* he then said, turning suddenly to Fra Fazio and forgetting that the latter did not understand Latin. But this oversight was precisely what gave effect to his words. If the father had tried to gain his point by arguing, Fra Fazio would have been sure to oppose reason to reason, and Heaven knows when and how the matter would have ended. But at the sound of words fraught with such mysterious significance and uttered in a tone of such authority, he acquiesced, deeming that they must contain the solution of all his doubts. " 'Tis well," he said; "thou knowest better than I."

"Let your heart be at rest," replied Father Cristoforo, and made towards the refugees by the uncertain glimmer of the sanctuary lamp. "Thank God, my children," he said to them, who had remained waiting in suspense all this time, "for having delivered you from grave danger. Belike at this very instant—" And here he proceeded to explain that which he had only intimated by the little messenger, for he suspected not that they knew more than he of the story he had to tell them, presuming that Menico had found them quietly at home before the marauders had appeared. No one disabused him, not even Lucia, who nevertheless felt a secret remorse for such duplicity with a man like Padre Cristoforo. But it was a night of confusion and subterfuge.

"After what hath happened," he continued, "you see plainly that the village is no longer safe for you. It is your home and the place of your birth; you have done no man harm; still God wills it so. It is a trial, my children. Bear it with patience,

with trustfulness, with forbearance, and rest assured that the time will come when your hearts will be glad of what now betides. I have taken thought for your shelter during these first days, and soon, I hope, you can return in safety to your homes. At all events God will manage all for your behoof, and I, on my part, shall endeavor not to be found wanting to the grace He hath shown me in selecting me for His agent to minister to your needs in tribulation. You," he went on, addressing himself to the women, "can bide at ——. There you will be far enough from danger and at the same time not too far from home. Look for our monastery, call the father-guardian and give him this letter. He will be another Padre Cristoforo to you. And thou, too, my dear Renzo, must for the present seek a place where thou wilt be safe from the rage of others as well as from thy own. Bear this letter to Father Bonaventura of Lodi at our monastery hard by the East Gate of Milan. He will be to thee at once a father and guide, and will find thee some employment against the time when thou canst return here and live in peace. Go now, and on the lake shore, nigh the mouth of the Bioni" (a mountain stream some few paces from Pescarenico) "ye shall see a bark standing. Call out: 'A boat!' 'For whom?' ye shall be asked. Reply, 'Saint Francis.' The bark will take you aboard and carry you across to the other shore, where you will find a conveyance to take you straight to ——."

If any one ask how Father Cristoforo had such prompt means of transportation by land and water at his disposal, he will show how little he knows of the power of a Capuchin with a reputation for sanctity.

The houses still remained to be thought of. Father Cristoforo took over the keys, engaging to consign them to the persons whom Renzo and Agnese designated. The latter heaved a great sigh as she drew hers from her pocket, reflecting that the house even then stood open and that it was a question, after the invasion it had suffered, if there was aught left to guard.

"Ere you depart," said the monk, "let us pray God all together to be with you in this journey and always, and above all, for the gift of His strength and His grace to will what He hath

willed." So saying, he knelt down in the middle of the church, as likewise did the others. After some moments of silent prayer the priest, in subdued but clear-sounding accents, uttered the following words: "We pray likewise for the poor unfortunate who hath reduced us to such a plight. We would be unworthy of Thy mercy, did we not ask it also for him, who hath so much need of it, from our hearts. We have this solace in our tribulation, that our feet are treading the path of Thy appointment. We can offer Thee our crosses and count them again. But he—he is Thy enemy, miserable man—he would strive against Thee. Have pity on him, O Lord; touch his heart, receive him back into Thy friendship and grant him all the blessings that we could wish for ourselves."

Then, arising with a hurried movement, he said: "Come, my children, there is no time to lose. May God have you in His keeping and His angel accompany you on your way. Farewell." As they were starting off, agitated by emotions that baffle speech but have an eloquence of their own, the friar subjoined in broken tones: "My heart tells me we shall soon meet again."

It is certain that the heart has something to say about what is to be, to him who listens. But what does it know? Scarcely a tithe of what has already happened.

Without pausing for a reply Fra Cristoforo turned towards the sacristy. The travelers went out of the church and Fra Fazio locked the door, after having bid them farewell in a voice that was also broken by feeling. They then bent their steps in silence towards the beach that had been indicated to them. They saw the boat waiting, and, after the pass-words had been exchanged, they went aboard. The boatman punted the bark off into deep water with one oar, then, seizing the other, he rowed with both hands towards the opposite strand. There was not a breath of wind blowing. The lake lay shimmering tranquilly under a moon which then hung in the meridian of the heavens and which betrayed by its undulating reflections on the mirror-like expanse of waters the sole indication that they were not absolutely at rest. The silence was unbroken, save for the lazy, monotonous rippling of the wave along the pebbly shore, farther off the

gurgling made by the current as it swirled past the piers of the bridge, and the regular plash of the oars as their blades clove the azure surface of the lake or rose dripping for the coming stroke. Their ever-lengthening path was marked by a dimpled furrow which streamed from under their keel towards the shore.

The passengers sat silent, with their faces turned back gazing at the mountains and the checkered lights and shadows of the landscape. Hamlets, dwellings and cotes stood out to the view. Don Rodrigo's castle with its flat donjon towered above the miserable huts clustered about the promontory like some blood-thirsty savage standing in the dark over a band of sleeping men and meditating, as he keeps watch, on the crime he means to perpetrate. Lucia shuddered as she beheld it. Then her eye roved down the slope of the mountain until it rested on her native hamlet. Focussing her glance on the edge of the settlement, she made out her cottage home, the thick foliage of the fig-tree rising over the garden-wall, even the window of her chamber; and, seated as she was on the bottom of the bark, she leaned her arm against the side and, burying her head as if to sleep, wept silent tears.

Farewell! ye mountains rising out of the azure flood beneath into azure skies above! Farewell! ye rugged peaks, whose image is engraved as clear and deep on the memory of him who was raised among you as that of his own nearest and dearest! ye mountain torrents, who babble to him, each with your own well-known accents; ye scattered hamlets, who loom up like pale flocks of sheep grazing on the moon-lit down; farewell! How sad the path that leads one away from such scenes of his childhood! Even when one parts from them voluntarily to seek elsewhere his fortune, he feels his soul disenchanted for the moment of its dreams of wealth. He wonders how he could ever have committed himself to such a resolution, and he would retrace his steps without delay, did he not hope to return again some day to live in riches. His eye shrinks back, with each step that he advances into the plain, in weariness and disgust from the unending monotony of the scene, and his lungs seem oppressed by the vapid air. He advances without interest or pleasure into the

city's turmoil, and feels himself cramped by its huddled heaps of houses and its bewildering maze of streets. He stands before buildings that are the cynosure of foreign eyes, and thinks with impatient longing of the cosy cottage with its modest acre in his native village which he has long marked for his own and which he will buy when he returns wealthy to his mountain home.

But what of one who had never cast one fugitive longing glance beyond its pale, who had centered there all her plans for the future, and who is then whisked far away by a perverse fortune! What of one who leaves these mountains, with the dearest of ties sundered and the fondest hopes shattered, to seek out strangers she has no wish to know, and who cannot even conjecture when she will come back! Farewell, native cottage, where secret dreams took shape as she sat listening with mysterious apprehension for one step that she learned to distinguish from all others! Farewell, yet unvisited roof-tree, the object of so many stolen glances in passing and the occasion of as many maidenly blushes, where fancy had painted a quiet, perennial life of conjugal bliss! Farewell, beloved church, where the soul so often forgot its troubles in singing the praises of the Lord; where she owned the promise of a rite that had already been prepared; where the secret longings of the heart were to meet a solemn benediction and love would become a commandment and deserve the name of holy; farewell! He Who is the Author of your delights is everywhere, and He does not mar the joy of His children except to prepare them for bliss that is greater and surer.

Of such a character, if not precisely such, were the thoughts of Lucia, and with but slight variations, the thoughts of the other two pilgrims, as the bark sped on towards the right bank of the Adda.

Chapter IX

The jolting of the boat against shore roused Lucia, who, after drying her tears in secret, raised her head as if awaking from sleep. Renzo alighted first and gave his hand to Agnese, who in turn gave hers to her daughter, and all three sorrowfully thanked the boatman. "And wherefore?" replied he. "Are we not together here below to help one another?" And he withdrew his hand with the same loathing as if it had been proposed to him to steal when Renzo tried to slip into it a part of the coin he had taken along with him that evening to remunerate Don Abbondio handsomely for his unwilling services. The conveyance was in readiness. The driver greeted the trio and took them in. Then, giving a word of command to the animal and with a crack of his whip, away he drove.

Our author does not describe this night ride nor give the name of the town to which Fra Cristoforo had directed the women—nay, he expressly protests his unwillingness to divulge it. The cause of this reticence transpires in the course of the story. Lucia's adventures in that quarter come to us bound up with the shady intrigue of a person belonging, it seems, to a family of great prestige at the period when our author wrote. To throw some light on her strange behavior in this juncture, he found it necessary to give a brief account of her antecedents, and her family makes the figure which those may see who read. But what the poor man's circumspection would have withheld our diligence has unearthed elsewhere. A Milanese historian[1] who had occasion to mention this same person, does not, it is true, give either her name or the name of the place, but observes of the latter that it was an ancient and aristocratic seat that lacked naught but the name of being a city. Elsewhere he says that it is on the banks of the Lambro and, in still another passage,

[1] Josephi Ripamonti; Historiae Patriae, Decadis, Lib. VI, Cap. III, pp. 358 et seq.

that an archpriest resides there. We conclude from a comparison of these data that it was none other than Monza; and, although in the vast treasure-house of learned inductions there may be some that are more subtle, there is none, I believe, that is surer. We might even, on the strength of well-grounded conjectures, give the name of the family; but, even though it has now been extinct for some time past, we deem it better to leave it in the ink-well, so as not to risk harming even the dead and to leave something to the research of scholars.

Our wayfarers, therefore, arrived at Monza shortly after sunrise. The driver went to an inn, where, in right of his familiarity with the place and his acquaintance with the landlord, he had a room assigned to them and accompanied them thither. Renzo tried, between their expressions of gratitude, to press some money upon this man too, but, like the boatman, he had in view another reward, more remote but more abundant. He also drew away his hand and ran off, as if in flight, to look after his beast of burden.

After an evening such as we have described and a night passed in the company of melancholy thoughts and anxious forebodings such as may easily be imagined, exposed to a breeze of more than autumnal keenness, and jolted about in an uncomfortable vehicle that rudely banished sleep as often as it lighted on their drooping eyelids, it seemed unreal to have a firm seat beneath them and four walls of a character howsoever unpretentious about them. They regaled themselves as well as the destitution of the time and their own precarious provision against the uncertainties of the future and their lack of appetite permitted. All three thought of the feast to which they had been looking forward two days ago, and sighed heavily. Renzo would fain have tarried all of that day at least, to see Lucia and her mother safely installed and to attend to their first requirements; but the friar's recommendation had been to send him upon his way at once. They, therefore, instanced these instructions and, together with them, a hundred other arguments—that people would talk, that the parting would be all the more painful the longer it was deferred, that he could come soon again to give news of

himself and receive theirs; with the result that he was prevailed upon to leave after some plan for a speedy reunion had been agreed upon among them. Lucia made no attempt to conceal her tears, and Renzo with difficulty restrained his. Wringing Agnese's hand, he bade them adieu in stifled accents and departed.

The women would now have been sorely perplexed but for the kind-hearted driver, who had orders to conduct them to the Capuchin monastery and lend any other help that their needs demanded. They set out, therefore, in company with him for the monastery, which lies, as every one is aware, only a few paces from Monza. On arriving at its portals, their conductor rang the bell and called for the father-guardian. He came without delay and took the letter at the threshold.

"Oh, Fra Cristoforo!" he exclaimed, recognizing the hand. The tone of his voice and the expression of his countenance indicated that he uttered the name of a great friend. One might easily surmise that in the letter good Padre Cristoforo had warmly recommended the women to the solicitude of his confrère and related their case with feeling; for, from time to time, the father-guardian betrayed traces, now of surprise, now of indignation, and again he would raise his eyes from the paper and fix them upon the women with a look of pity or of deep interest. The reading finished, he remained for some time buried in thought; then, "There is none but her ladyship," he said. "If her ladyship will champion their cause . . . ."

Drawing Agnese aside in the square fronting the monastery he made several inquiries and received the desired information. Then, turning around to Lucia, he addressed both: "My good women, I shall essay to find you an asylum which, unless my hopes prove fallacious, will afford you something more than respectable safety until God provides in better wise. Will you come along?"

The women bowed their respectful acquiescence, and the friar resumed: "Very good. Then without more delay I shall take you to her ladyship's convent. But follow at a little distance, because folks are given to scandal-mongering; and the Lord

only knoweth what gossips would say if they saw the father-guardian walking along the street with a comely damsel—with women, I mean."

So saying, he walked ahead. Lucia turned crimson. The driver smiled at Agnese, who could not repress a smile herself; and, when the friar had a start of some ten paces, all three moved on and followed in his wake. The women then inquired of the driver what they had not the hardihood to ask the father—who was "her ladyship"?

"Her ladyship," he replied, "is a nun; but she is not like the rest of them. Not that she is abbess, nor prioress neither. Nay, 'tis said she is one of the very youngest. But she is a limb of Adam. In former times her people were grandees of Spain, where be those in authority, and that is why she is called 'her ladyship,' to signify that she is a great lady. The whole country knows her by this name, for they never had such a personage in the place before. Her people down in Milan stand high and are the kind who always have their own way of things, and still more here in Monza, where her father, though he lives hence, is the chief citizen. Hence it is that her will is law in the convent and she is tendered so highly abroad. She succeeds in everything she undertakes, and so, if this good religious here gets you under her wing and she agrees, I can answer for it that you would not be safer upon the altar."

When the father-guardian had arrived within a short distance of the city-gate, flanked at that date by an old tower half in ruins and by the dilapidated remains of a barbarous castle that a half-dozen or so of my readers may remember to have seen still standing, he stopped and looked about to see if the others were coming, then passed on into the town and wended his way towards the convent. He paused again upon reaching the threshold to await the party. He begged the driver to come in a couple of hours for his reply. The latter promised compliance and then took his leave of Agnese and Lucia, who loaded him with their thanks and with messages for Father Cristoforo. The monk ushered mother and daughter into the outer court of the convent, and, conducting them into the apartments of the lay

portress, went alone to plead his suit. In a short while he returned with a beaming countenance to summon them inside with him; and in good time, because mother and daughter were well-nigh at their wits' end to baffle the inquisitiveness of their entertainer. In passing through the inner court he gave the pair some hints on the way to conduct themselves before her ladyship. "She is well disposed towards you," he said, "and she can do you no end of good. Bear yourselves humbly and respectfully, answer the questions she may be pleased to put with frankness, and, when you are not interrogated, let me treat with her."

They entered a lower chamber which communicated with the parlor. Before stepping in, the monk pointed to the door and said in an undertone, "She is in here," as if to recall his admonitions to their minds. Lucia, who had never seen a convent, looked around the parlor when she was inside for the lady to whom obeisance was to be made, and, seeing no one, stood as if enchanted, when, perceiving the father and Agnese approach one of the corners, she looked in that direction and beheld a curiously designed window, closed in at the interval of a hand one from the other by two successive gratings of massive, closely joined iron bars. Behind them stood the nun. Her features, which might be those of a woman of five-and-twenty, impressed one at first sight as beautiful; but it was a beauty that had suffered sad inroads, beauty that had fallen into the sere and yellow and almost into decay. A black veil, ironed flat over the crown of the head, fell down somewhat away from the face upon both shoulders, and beneath it a linen band of snowy white concealed the upper half of a brow whose whiteness, though of a different order, was not less dazzling. Another band, gathered into plaits, was drawn down either side of the face under the chin, where it terminated in a wimple that extended part way over the breast, concealing the neck of a black habit. A kind of painful spasm frequently passed across her forehead, the sudden contraction causing her black eyebrows almost to meet. A pair of eyes, also jet-black, fastened themselves at times upon one's countenance with a haughty and searching look. At times they dropped suddenly, as if to escape detection.

An attentive observer might be persuaded that now they sued for affection, for sympathy and compassion; again, he might imagine that he could make out a flash of hatred long pent up, a suggestion of vindictiveness and ferocity. When they were at rest or fixed upon indifferent objects, one might have read in them a pride insufferably bored; another, the gnawing of a secret buried in her breast, of a worry that was never absent from her thought and which put near-by objects far into the background. Her pale cheeks curved off in oval lines of delicacy and grace, which were marred, however, by the slow process of emaciation. The lips, although tinted by only the faintest hue of roses, stood out in contrast against the general pallor, and their movements, like those of her eyes, were twitchy, nervous and suggestive of meaning and mystery. The natural stateliness of her figure was lost sight of in the lack of dignity that marked her carriage, or actually told against her in the light of a certain precipitateness of movement which would have been unconventional and unseemingly abrupt for a lady, not to say a nun. In the dress itself there was here and there some foppishness or slovenliness, which, in a religious, bespoke eccentricity. The waist was drawn in with a certain carefulness that smacked of the world, and from beneath her head-band there hung down over one temple a curl of black hair—a sure sign of either contempt or heedlessness of the rule which prescribed that from the moment the hair is shorn in the solemn rite of reception it should never be allowed to grow.

These things did not shock two peasant women inexperienced in distinguishing between nun and nun; and the father-guardian, who was not looking on her for the first time, was, like so many others, already accustomed to that indefinable peculiarity which marked her person as well as her manners.

She stood, as we have said before, close by the grating, leaning languidly against it with one hand, her milk-white fingers twined about the bars and her glance fastened upon Lucia as she timidly approached. "Reverend mother and illustrious lady," said the monk, with his head bowed and his hand on his breast, "this is

the poor maiden on whom you have given me to hope you will bestow your powerful protection; and this is her mother."

The two made a profound obeisance, to which her ladyship replied by a wave of the hand. Then, turning to the friar, she said: "It is a happy fortune that enables me to oblige our good friends the Capuchin fathers. But," she continued, "let me hear somewhat more fully of the maiden's case, to see better what can be done for her."

Lucia turned scarlet and hung her head.

"You should know, then, reverend mother—" Agnese was beginning, when the priest cut her short with a look, and replied: "The maid, your illustrious ladyship, comes to me recommended, as I have said before, by one of my fellow-monks. She has had to depart clandestinely from her native village to escape grave perils, and now has need for a while of a retreat where she can live unknown, and where no one may venture to disturb her, even though——"

"What kind of perils?" interrupted her ladyship. "Under your favor, father-guardian, make not such a riddle of the thing. You know that nuns like to hear these stories circumstantially as well as others."

"They are perils," replied the guardian, "which in the chaste hearing of the reverend mother can only be vaguely intimated——"

"Oh, surely," her ladyship quickly replied, blushing slightly. Was it modesty? Had any one observed the swift look of displeasure which accompanied her blushes, he might have doubted it, particularly if he had compared them with those which from time to time suffused the cheeks of Lucia.

"Suffice it to say," resumed the monk, "that a high-handed nobleman—not all the great ones of the earth use the gifts of God for His glory and the behoof of the neighbor like your illustrious ladyship—a high-handed noble, after having for some time pursued this child with his unworthy advances, seeing that they were spurned, had the hardihood to resort openly to force, so that the poor creature has been reduced to the extremity of fleeing her home."

"Approach nearer, fair maid," said her ladyship to Lucia, beckoning at the same time with her finger. "I know that the father-guardian is the mouth of truth, but this is an affair in which none is better informed than thou. It is for thee to say whether this noble's persecution was odious."

Lucia approached with prompt obedience, but to reply was a different matter. It would have embarrassed her not a little to be interrogated on such a question even by one in her own walk of life; but, coming as it did from a lady of high rank and made with a certain air of malicious skepticism, the inquiry left her no courage to reply. "Your ladyship—reverend—mother," she faltered, and then seemed at a loss for anything further to say. At this point Agnese thought herself authorized, as being next best informed, to step into the breach. "Your ladyship," she said, "I can bear witness that my daughter detested this noble as the devil doth holy water—detested him, I mean, as the devil himself, which he was. If I speak amiss, your ladyship will pardon me, for we are but plain, well-meaning people. The fact of the matter is that this poor child had been betrothed to a promising, God-fearing youth of our own station, and, if our worshipful pastor had been a little more after the pattern of men I could name—I know 'tis of a religious I speak, but Padre Cristoforo, the friend of the father-guardian here, is no less a religious, and he is a man with a heart full of charity, and were he here, he could vouch——"

"You are very ready to speak without being asked," interrupted the nun with an air of haughtiness and anger which made her appear almost ugly. "Hold your tongue. I am not now to learn that parents always have an answer to give for their children."

The mortified Agnese gave Lucia a glance that said: See what I get for your being so muddle-headed. The father-guardian also intimated to the maiden by a nod of the head and a glance of the eye that it was time to find her tongue and not leave her poor mother in the lurch.

"Your ladyship," said Lucia, "all that my mother has said is the pure truth. It was by my own choice that I accepted" (and

her face turned crimson) "the youth who paid me his suit. Pardon me if I speak with such unreserve, but it is that you may not think ill of my mother. As for the nobleman, God forgive him! I had liefer die than fall into his hands. And, if your ladyship will have the charity to harbor us, since we are reduced to the shamelessness of begging shelter and troubling respectable persons—but God's will be done!—be sure that no one could pray more fervently for your ladyship than we poor creatures shall."

"Thee I believe," said her ladyship in softened accents. "But I would fain hear thee when we are alone. Not that I have need of further explanations or further incentives to satisfy the anxiety of the father-guardian," she quickly added, turning to him with a studied courteousness. "I have even," she continued, "given it thought already, and this is what appears to me best for the nonce. The portress of the monastery a few days ago married off her youngest daughter. These women can occupy the room she vacated and perform the few duties she fulfilled. In sooth"—and here she beckoned the guardian to approach the grating and continued in an undertone—"in sooth we had not thought of replacing the damsel, seeing what a poor year it is, but I shall speak to the mother abbess, and at a word from me—and for a case in which the father-guardian is interested. In short, it is as good as done."

The guardian was beginning to thank her, but her ladyship cut him short with: "No need of protestations. If occasion required—if I were in need—I should know how to lay the Capuchins under contribution, too. In fine," she proceeded with a smile of expressible irony and bitterness—"in fine, are not we brothers and sisters?"

So saying, she called a lay sister (two of them were, by a singular privilege, assigned to her personal service), and bade her notify the abbess and then make the necessary arrangements with the portress and Agnese. She then dismissed the latter, gave the father-guardian permission to retire, and detained Lucia. The monk accompanied Agnese to the door, supplementing the instructions he had already given her, and then took

himself off to write his friend Cristoforo a report of his management. "She's a madcap, to be sure, her ladyship!" he reflected as he wended his way along the street—"a queer woman, by my troth. Yet, so one knoweth the frets and stops of her humor, she can be made to play what music he will. Little will my friend Cristoforo expect such despatch and such thoroughness. The dear good man! always burthening himself with some one's troubles! Heigh-ho! there's no warping him from his course, and his intentions are the best. But it's well for him this time that he hath found a friend who could bring his affairs to so successful and speedy a termination without any elaborate ado or flourish of trumpets. And so, while I have gratified my good Cristoforo, I shall have proved to him that we of Monza are not without some worth in the world."

Her ladyship, who, while she was in the presence of a Capuchin advanced in years, had weighed her words and her actions, now that she was alone with an unsophisticated peasant girl thought no longer of restraint; and her conversation became little by little so strange that, instead of detailing it, we deem it more to the purpose to relate briefly the wretched woman's past history —so much of it, that is to say, as will suffice to give a clue to the mysteriousness and extravagance we have already remarked in her and to render comprehensible the motives of her conduct in the sequel.

She was the youngest daughter of Prince ————, a great Milanese nobleman, who could be reckoned among the city's richest citizens. But the high opinion he entertained of his house made his resources appear barely sufficient, nay flatly inadequate, to maintain its prestige; and all his concern was to keep them, such as they were, in one line, as far as depended upon him. History does not record precisely how many children he had; it only leaves it to be understood that he had destined all the cadets of either sex for the cloister, so as to leave his substance intact for the eldest son, who was destined in turn to perpetuate the family—that is, to bring other children into the world to be tortured in the same manner. The unfortunate subject of the narrative had not yet issued from her mother's

womb when her state in life had already been irrevocably settled. It only remained to determine whether she was to be a monk or a nun, a decision which waited upon, not her consent, but her physical presence. When she was at length delivered, the prince her father, wishing to confer a name that would conjure up immediately the idea of the cloister and would go back to a saint of high lineage, called her Gertrude. Dolls dressed in nun's costume were the first toys put into her hands, then holy pictures representing nuns; such presents always being accompanied by the warm recommendation to treasure them as something precious and the interrogative affirmation: "Pretty, eh?"

Whenever the prince or his wife or heir, who alone of the male children had been raised at home, wished to commend the little maid's thriving appearance, they seemed unable to find any other way of expressing their idea aright than by the words: "What a mother-abbess!" Still no one ever told her directly that she must become a nun. It was something that every conversation touching her future destiny simply took for granted and referred to by allusion. If, at times, the little Gertrude was guilty of some trifling arrogance or haughtiness, to the which her nature was strongly inclined, "You are only a child," she would be told; "such conduct is unbecoming. When you are mother-abbess, then you can rule at will and others must do your bidding." At other times the prince, wishing to chide her for a certain freedom and familiarity of manner to which she was equally prone, "Fie! fie!" he would say. "This is not the way for one of your rank to behave. If you wish one day to claim the deference which will be your due, you must begin even now to learn self-respect. Remember that in the convent you ought to be first in all things, because blood will brook superiors in nothing."

All these remarks impressed upon the child's mind the idea that she was to become a religious, but those which fell from the lips of her father were more effective than all the others combined. The prince usually presented the mien of an austere master, but, when there was question of his children's future state, his every word and look breathed an unalterable determi-

nation of will and a jealous attachment to his authority which conveyed the impression of fatal necessity.

At six years of age Gertrude was placed in the convent where we have seen her, to receive an education and, still more, to be trained for the vocation which had been imposed upon her. The place was not chosen undesignedly. Agnese and Lucia's kind-hearted guide said that her ladyship's father was the chief citizen of Monza, and piecing together these indifferent bits of evidence with other hints that our anonymous author unwarily drops from time to time, we might also set it down that the town was a fief of his. However this may be, he enjoyed great influence in that quarter, and he concluded that she would be treated with greater distinction and favoritism than elsewhere and thus be inveigled into choosing that convent for her permanent home. Nor was he deceived. The abbess and some other scheming nuns who had the whip-hand of the community, as we say, rejoiced at this pledge of a patronage which would be so useful in their moments of need and so honorable at all times. They accepted this proposal with protestations of gratitude that, for all their fulsomeness, were not exaggerated, and they entered fully into the intentions which the prince had hinted at in regard to his daughter's settlement for life—intentions which accorded so well with their own.

Hardly had Gertrude entered the doors of the convent when to her own name was substituted that of "Her ladyship." She had a place apart at table and in the dormitory. Her conduct was held up as an example to the rest. Sweetmeats and endearments were lavished upon her, all seasoned with that deferential kind of familiarity which makes such an appeal to children when they find it in those who habitually adopt a lofty attitude towards other children. Not that all the nuns were in the conspiracy to ensnare the poor innocent. There were many simple, guileless souls among them who would have recoiled in horror from the thought of sacrificing a daughter to the interested aims of a parent. But of these, some did not clearly perceive the intrigue that was afoot, and others did not detect the extent to which it was criminal, some simply refrained from prying into the matter,

and more held their peace to save useless scandal, while all were intent on their several private occupations. Perhaps one of their number, recalling the arts by which she had been cajoled into taking a step that she afterwards regretted, might be stirred with compassion for the poor little victim and assuage these feelings by melancholy but tender caresses. The child, however, was far from suspecting the mystery that lurked beneath these endearments, and so the attempt went steadily on.

Thus it might have gone on to the end had Gertrude been the only girl in the convent. But among her fellow-students there were some who knew that they were destined for marriage. Gertrude, reared in the notion of her own superiority, used to speak loftily of her future as abbess of the convent and princess of the cloister. She aspired, above all things, to become an object of envy to the others, and it was with astonishment and chagrin she perceived that some of them were altogether untouched by such a sentiment. Over against the dignified, but cold and circumscribed, pictures which supremacy in a convent can furnish forth, they set the varied and iridescent visions of bridals and of banquets, of receptions and of balls, of summering in the country, of trousseaux and of coaches-and-six. Such images created just the same stir and flutter in the brain of Gertrude that a large basket of fresh-culled flowers would excite if placed in front of a hive of bees. Parents and instructors had encouraged and developed her natural vanity in order to render the cloister attractive, but, once this passion had tasted of ideas so much more congenial to it, it pounced upon them with an avidity that was keener and more spontaneous. Not to be outdone by her companions, and at the same time to indulge her new-born humor, she would retort that, when all was said and done, no one could foist the veil on her without her own consent, that she too could marry and live in a palace and enjoy the world and none to rival her; that she could do so provided that she wished to, that she might so wish; that she did wish it. And wish it she finally did in good earnest.

The necessity of her consent, which up to that time had had only a subconscious existence in her thoughts, tucked away in a

corner of her brain, now loomed up large and showed its true importance. She fell back upon it unceasingly, to indulge her day-dreams of a delightful future in greater tranquillity. Another thought, however, always infallibly arose in the background—that it was to the prince her father that it was question of refusing her consent, which he already took, or pretended to take, for granted; and at this reflection the daughter's heart was far from feeling that confidence which her words implied. Then she would compare herself with her comrades, whose confidence rested on quite different grounds, and the envy she had thought to inspire in them filled her own soul with bitterness. Hatred followed close upon envy. At times this hatred cropped forth in spitefulness, incivility and harsh words; at times it was lulled to rest by a community of inclinations and hopes which gave rise to a seeming and transitory intimacy. Now, wishing to gratify herself with something that had reality in the present, she would console herself with the privileges allotted her and flaunt her superiority in the faces of the others; again, no longer able to endure the solitude of her fears and desires, she would be all goodness and go in search of them, as if to solicit kindness, advice and encouragement.

Amid such petty but deplorable conflicts with herself and others she passed beyond the bounds of childhood and entered upon that critical period when some mysterious power seems to steal into the soul, awakening, coloring and reenforcing all its inclinations and thoughts and sometimes transforming them and turning their course into unforeseen channels. What Gertrude had longed for most tangibly in her day-dreams of the future had, up to the present, been outward splendor and pomp; now certain indefinable soft, tender yearnings, which had at first been present in a misty kind of way, began to gather shape and dominate her fancy. She had constructed in her mind's inmost recesses a radiant retreat, and into that she would withdraw from external objects to receive personages strangely conjoint of the confused memories of childhood, of the little she had been able to see of the outer world and of what she had gathered from the conversations of her companions.

She gave herself up to their entertainment, talked to them and herself answered in their name; she issued behests and received homage of every description. From time to time the thought of religion came to disturb these brilliant but wearying festivals. But religion, as it had been put before the poor child and as she had accepted it, placed no ban upon pride, nay, pride was turned into a virtue and held up as a means to earthly happiness. Bereft of its essence, it was thus no longer religion, but a phantom like all the rest. During those intervals in which this phantom predominated in Gertrude's imagination the unfortunate girl, in an access of confused terror and distorted sense of duty, fancied that her aversion to the cloister and her opposition to the importunities of her elders as to the choice of a state of life were culpable, and she promised her conscience to immure herself voluntarily in the cloister in expiation.

There was a rule that no young woman could be accepted as a religious without first having been examined by an ecclesiastic called the nuns' vicar, or by some one else delegated for that office, as a guarantee that she entered of her own accord; and this examination might not take place until a year after the candidate had presented an application in writing to the vicar signifying her desires. The nuns who had undertaken the odious responsibility of committing Gertrude to an irrevocable step with the least possible knowledge of what she was about, seized upon one of the moments we have mentioned to make her transcribe and sign such an application. To prevail upon her more easily, they neglected not to point out and reiterate that, after all, it was a mere formality that could only gain effect from subsequent acts, which would depend on her own free will. This was the real truth; but for all that Gertrude had regretted signing the application before it had, perhaps, reached its destination. Then she repented of these regrets, and thus days and months passed by in an incessant alternation of contrary emotions.

For a long time she kept this move hidden from her companions, now out of the fear of compromising a good resolution, now for shame at divulging a blunder. The desire of unburden-

ing her mind and of begging advice and encouragement finally prevailed. Another law of the Church provided that a young woman might not undergo the examination into her vocation except after at least one month's sojourn outside of the convent where she had been educated. A year had now elapsed since her application had been despatched, and Gertrude was notified that she would shortly be taken from the convent to spend the stipulated month in her father's house, there to fulfil all the conditions necessary to complete the work she had in truth begun. The prince and the rest of the family took all this for granted as if it were an accomplished fact, but the maiden had quite other thoughts in mind. Instead of contemplating the fulfilment of the other conditions, she was considering a way to cancel the first step. In such a dilemma she resolved to open her heart to one of her companions who was the most outspoken and daring adviser of them all. She suggested that Gertrude inform her father by letter of her new resolution, since her courage was not sufficient to refuse him point-blank to his face. And, gratuitous advice being so scarce a commodity in this world, its author indemnified herself by heaping ridicule on Gertrude for being so poor-spirited. The letter was concerted among four or five confidantes, written surreptitiously and delivered by the most elaborate strategy. Gertrude awaited in great suspense a reply which never came; but a few days later the abbess summoned her to her cell, and with a demeanor expressive at once of mystery, disgust and compassion, she threw out dark hints of the prince's great anger and of some fault that she must have committed, intimating, however, that by good behavior she might hope to have it condoned. The lass understood and forbore to inquire further.

At last the day so feared and so longed for came around. Although Gertrude knew that she was approaching an ordeal, still the sensation of getting out of the convent, of leaving behind her the walls in which she had been shut up for eight years, of racing through the open country in a carriage and of seeing again her own city and home, were fraught with tumultuous joy. As to the struggle, she had already concerted measures with her con-

fidantes and drawn up a plan of action. "Either they will wish to force me," she thought; "and then I shall be firm. I shall remain humble and respectful, but I will not give in. It is only a question of not saying 'Yes' again, and I will never say it. Or they will meet me with kindness, and I shall be kinder still. I shall weep, I shall entreat, I shall melt their hearts. After all, my only object is not to be immolated." But, as often happens with similar previsions, neither the one nor the other came to pass. Day succeeded day without her father or the others mentioning the application or the retraction, and without any proposal being made either by way of cajolery or threats.

The family were solemn, gloomy, repellent, without ever telling her the reason why. It was only made plain that they regarded her as a culprit and a wretch. A mysterious anathema seemed to hang over her, isolating her from the family and lifting the ban only as often as there was need of aweing her. Rarely and only at fixed hours was she admitted to the society of her parents and eldest brother. The three of them seemed bound together in a close union of mind and heart, which rendered Gertrude's exclusion more noticeable and more painful. No one addressed her, and, if she timidly hazarded a word that necessity did not demand, it either went unnoticed or was met by a vacant, uninterested stare, if not by a sneer or a frown. But if, unable longer to endure the bitterness and humiliation of such distinctions, she would persist in her overtures and try to ingratiate herself, if she but implored a little of their love, immediately the topic of her vocation was broached, allusively but unmistakably, and she was covertly reminded that the road to her family's affections was always open. Then Gertrude, who was loath to retrieve them at such a price, was constrained to draw back, reject the first tokens of that good-will she had so coveted, and of her own choice resume the place of an outcast. Moreover, she now occupied it with some appearance of being in the wrong.

Such experiences in the world of reality made a painful contrast with those smiling visions which Gertrude had so cherished, and still cherished, in the intimacy of her heart. She had hoped that, amid the throng of guests in the splendid paternal mansion,

she would enjoy some real savor of what her fancy had anticipated, but she was disappointed completely. Her confinement was as strict and thorough as it had been in the convent. Even the mention of stirring abroad was tabooed, and a gallery, opening from the palace into an adjoining church, removed the only occasion there might have been for going out. Her society was gloomier, more limited and monotonous than it had been in Monza. At the announcement of visitors Gertrude was fain to mount to the top floor of the house and shut herself in with some old serving-women. There also she took her meals when there were guests. The servants uniformly patterned their speech and manners upon the example and intentions of their masters, and Gertrude, who, from inclination, would have wished to treat them with the easy familiarity of one to the manner born, and who, in her actual circumstances, would have welcomed some more democratic demonstration of affection from them, and even condescended to sue for it, had to bear the humiliation and the additional anguish of seeing her advances met with unconcealed disregard, albeit accompanied by some measure of perfunctory deference.

She could not fail to observe, however, that a page, in striking contrast to the rest, bore himself towards her with a respect and heartfelt compassion of an uncommon kind. The lad had an air which approached, more closely than aught she had yet seen, to that order of things contemplated in her imagination—the air of her ideal heroes. Little by little a new development was noticed in the maiden's deportment, a serenity which differed from that of yesterday as her restlessness now differed from that which had preceded it—the demeanor as of one who has come across a treasure-trove which he wishes to keep from profane eyes, to gloat over incessantly himself. A stricter watch than ever was placed upon her, and—to make a long story short—she was one morning surprised by one of the serving-women as she was furtively folding a piece of paper on which it had been better for her not to have written anything. After a brief scuffle the note came into the possession of the serving-woman, whence it passed into the hands of the prince.

The terror of Gertrude at the sound of his footsteps is neither to be described nor imagined. That parent, who was so inexorable with innocence, must now be faced in his wrath by her guilty conscience! But, when she saw him standing before her with that ominous frown on his face and the fatal missive in his hands, ah! then the deepest dungeon would have been a welcome refuge, to say nothing of the cloister. His words were few but terrible. The immediate penalty was nothing more than to be confined in her chamber under the surveillance of the servant who had caught her. But this was only the beginning, an expedient of the first moment; another and ill-defined chastisement, the more terrifying for its vagueness, was darkly adumbrated against the future.

The page was dismissed forthwith, as was natural, and threatened with dire vengeance if he should even dare to breathe a word of the occurrence. In laying this injunction upon him, the prince emphasized it by twice solemnly boxing his ears to associate the adventure with a reminder which would remove any temptation the stripling might entertain to boast of it. It was not difficult to find some pretext for cashiering a page; as to the daughter, it was merely said that she was indisposed.

Thus began for Gertrude a reign of suspense and mortification, of remorse for the past and terror for the future, relieved only by the companionship of a woman whom she detested as the witness of her crime and the occasion of her misfortune. The latter reciprocated by hating Gertrude for being reduced to the tedious life of jailer for a period which could not be foreseen and the perpetual custody of a dangerous secret.

The first tumult of thoughts gradually subsided, but, as they returned and passed in review singly before her mind, they grew in proportions and leisurely racked her soul with their separate and peculiar tortures. What could that mysterious chastisement be with which she had been threatened? Many diverse and fantastic possibilities presented themselves to her vivid and inexperienced imagination. What appeared the most likely was that of being led back to the convent of Monza, no longer in the guise of a great lady but of a culprit and of being mewed up within

its walls God knew how long or on what disgraceful terms. Apprehended shame was probably the bitterest ingredient of all in the cup that was overflowing with bitter anticipations. The phrases, the words, the very punctuation-points of that ill-starred letter flashed before her memory with unflagging persistence. She fancied them being scrutinized and mentally commented upon by a reader who was so unforeseen and so different from the intended recipient. She calculated the chances of their having come under the eyes of her mother, her brother and Heaven knew how many more, and at this surmise all the others seemed a mere trifle. The image of him who had been the origin of the whole scandal failed not to join the throng of phantoms which haunted the poor recluse, and the reader is left to imagine how strangely it assorted with the solemn, cold-blooded and forbidding company into which it was thrown. But precisely because she could not divorce them nor revert for a single moment to those fugitive delights without their distressing consequences rising up straightway before her, she began little by little to indulge in them less frequently, then to shun their memory and finally to wean herself from them entirely.

Nor did she, from now on, take prolonged, or even voluntary, pleasure in those radiant, jocund fancies of former days—they were too much at variance with the circumstances of the present, and, in all probability, of the future. The only castle now not in the air, in which she could picture any peace or honor, was the convent, if she should make up her mind to enter it for good. Such a resolution, she did not doubt, would smooth away all difficulties, cancel every score against her and change her situation in the twinkling of an eye. Against such a plan, it is true, the thoughts of a whole life-time rose in rebellion; but the times were changed, and in the abyss into which Gertrude had fallen and by comparison with what her fears foreshadowed in certain moments, playing the rôle of nun and being acclaimed, honored and obeyed seemed a rosy prospect indeed. Two sentiments of very different kinds contributed also at intervals to lessen her old aversion to the cloister; at times, remorse for her misstep and a devout sentimentality; at times, the bitterness and exasperation

which her pride suffered from the behavior of her jailer, who (often, in truth, under provocation) vented her spite by evoking the bugaboo of that impending chastisement, or again, shamed her with her misdemeanor. Still more odious than insult was the patronizing air she assumed when she wished to be agreeable. On such occasions the desire which Gertrude habitually felt to be free of her clutches and independent both of her anger and of her sympathy became so acute as to make any means towards its fulfilment seem a welcome consummation.

One morning, after four or five long days of imprisonment, Gertrude, enraged beyond endurance by the spitefulness of her guardian, hid herself in a corner and remained with her face buried in her hands, digesting her spleen. An ungovernable longing assailed her for the sight of other faces, the sound of other voices and a different style of treatment. She thought of her father, of her family. The thought appalled her temporarily, but she reflected that it depended only on her to win their friendship, and a sudden joy filled her. On its heels followed confusion and an extraordinary compunction for her offense, accompanied by an equally strong impulse of atonement. Not that her will rested upon that resolve, but never had it been so lively. She arose, and, going to a desk, took up the fatal pen and wrote her father a letter brimful of generosity and abjection, of tribulation and hope, imploring pardon and promising unreserved acquiescence in whatever it might please him to exact in return for his indulgence.

Chapter X

There are moments when the soul, especially the soul of the young, is disposed to yield at the slightest pressure to the appeals of aught that bears the guise of goodness or sacrifice—like a new-blown flower, languidly resigning its weight upon the frail stem and releasing its fragrance unbidden to the very first breeze that blows. These moods, which the beholder should contemplate only with respect and awe, are the very occasions which interested schemers sedulously watch for, dishonestly seizing upon them to fetter the will of the unsuspecting.

At the sight of the letter the prince saw a door opened to his old, unremitting ambition. He summoned Gertrude to his presence, and in the interval of waiting he prepared to strike while the iron was hot. She appeared, and, without raising her eyes to her father's face, she threw herself upon her knees with barely breath enough left to ask for pardon. He motioned her to rise, but in a voice little calculated to inspire courage he replied that pardon was not a thing to be merely desired or implored—that was an expedient too feasible and natural when one was guilty of wrong and feared punishment—in a word, that it must be merited. Gertrude submissively and tremblingly inquired what it behooved her to do. The prince (we have not the heart in such circumstances to call him by the name of father) did not answer directly, but began to expatiate upon her misdemeanor, every word thrilling her with pain like a rude hand rasping against a fresh wound. He went on to say that, though he had entertained a notion, even in imagination, of settling her in the world, she herself had now placed an insurmountable difficulty in the way, since he could not in honor prevail upon himself to offer a respectable man the hand of a young woman who had betrayed such propensities. His miserable auditor was crushed. Gradually softening his voice and his expressions, the prince then continued that every offence admits of a remedy and con-

donement; that hers in particular belonged to a class for which the remedy is plainly indicated; that she should take warning from her sad experience that a secular life was fraught with too many dangers for her——

"Ah! yes," exclaimed Gertrude, the spirit at last broken by fear and an insistent sense of shame and her heart melting with sudden tenderness.

"Ah! you perceive it yourself," the prince incontinently rejoined. "Well, let us say no more of the past. All is forgotten. You have chosen the only course which in honor and propriety you could take; but, since you have done it with such a good will and grace, it shall be my care that your path will be a uniformly pleasant one and that your decision shall redound solely to your own advantage and merit." So saying, he rang a bell which stood on the desk and bade the servant summon the princess and the heir instantly. "I wish them," he then resumed with Gertrude, "to share at once in my consolation. It is my purpose that you begin from this moment to receive that consideration which is your due. You have experienced something of a father's sternness; you shall now make trial of his love."

At these words Gertrude remained thunderstruck. She wondered how a mere "Yes" slipping from her tongue could come to mean so much. She then cast about for some means of revoking it or restricting its scope; but so complete seemed the prince's good faith, so jealous of interference his joy, so conditional his favor, that Gertrude durst not speak a word that would disturb harmony for a single instant.

After a short space the pair arrived, and, seeing Gertrude, stared in doubt and wonder. But the prince with an air of cheerfulness and amiability that compelled their imitation, "Behold," he said, "the stray sheep; and let this be the last word to recall sad memories. Behold, rather, the consolation of the family. Gertrude no longer needs to be advised. What we desired for her good she hath chosen spontaneously. She is resolved—she has given me to understand that she is resolved——" At this juncture she bent on him a look of terror and entreaty, as if

beseeching him to desist; but he serenely pursued—"that she is resolved to take the veil."

"Bravo! bravo!" exclaimed mother and son with one voice. They took turns at embracing Gertrude, who received these demonstrations with tears that were interpreted as tears of pious joy. Then the prince dilated upon what he would do to render his daughter's portion one of gladness and splendor. He spoke of the distinctions she would enjoy in the convent and town: that she would there be the same as a princess, the family's representative; that no sooner would she reach a suitable age than she would be advanced to the first place, and that in the meantime she was to be a subject only in name. The princess and the young prince renewed their congratulations and plaudits at every moment. Gertrude was like one in a dream.

"We must fix the day for going to Monza and making application to the abbess," said the prince. "How delighted she will be. I can tell you that the entire convent will know how to appreciate the honor Gertrude is doing them. Nay—why not go today? Gertrude would be glad to take a little air."

"Let us go," quoth the princess.

"I'll give orders," volunteered the heir.

"But——" timidly hazarded Gertrude.

"Softly, softly," resumed the prince; "let us leave the decision with her. Perhaps she does not feel equal to it today and would prefer to wait until tomorrow. Say, shall it be today or tomorrow?"

"Tomorrow," she replied huskily, deeming the short respite so much gained.

"Tomorrow be it," solemnly pronounced the prince. "She hath determined that we go tomorrow. Meanwhile I shall go to the vicar's, to arrange a day for the examination." Acting on the word, he withdrew and carried his condescension so far as really to make the proposed call upon the vicar. They settled upon the second day afterwards for his visit.

During the rest of that day Gertrude enjoyed not a moment's peace. After so much excitement she would fain have given her soul an interval of repose, during which to clarify her thoughts,

take inventory of what she had done and what remained to do, to know her mind, in short, and to check the momentum of that machinery which, once set in motion, was rushing along so furiously. But there was no escape. One occupation succeeded another so fast that they overlapped. Immediately after the prince's departure she was conducted into her mother's boudoir to be combed and arrayed by the princess' own maid under maternal supervision. She had not received the finishing touches when word was brought that the prince was in the dining-hall. Gertrude passed along through the midst of bowing servitors, who indicated their joy at her recovery, and found awaiting her some of the closest of her kinsmen, who had been hurriedly invited to show her honor and to felicitate her on the twofold event of her return to health and her advertised entrance into religion.

The little bride (it was thus that young candidates for the cloister were known, and it was by this title that Gertrude was greeted upon her appearance by all)—the little bride was at pains to reply to the compliments which were showered on her from all sides. She was keenly sensible that every one of these replies was an acceptance and a confirmation; but what other style of response was possible? Scarcely had they risen from table when the hour for the drive came around. Gertrude entered the carriage with her mother and two uncles who had been at dinner. After making the usual circuit they turned into the Strada Marina, which was the place where the aristocracy used to drive after the fatigues of the day and which traversed the space now occupied by the public gardens. The uncles addressed a part of their remarks to Gertrude, as etiquette prescribed for that day. One of them, who, more than the other, seemed to know every individual, every carriage, every livery, and who had some remark to make each second about His Lordship This and Her Ladyship That, all of a sudden turned to his niece and said: "Ah! thou little rogue, to turn thy back upon all these frivolities! Thou hast a shrewd head-piece. We poor worldings are left to flounder in the slough, while thou turnest aside into paths of blessedness and goest to paradise in a coach-and-six."

They returned home at nightfall, to be notified by the servants,

who rushed out with links to meet them, that a large gathering of visitors was in waiting. The word had gone forth, and relatives and friends were come to pay their respects. Upon entering the reception-hall, the little bride became the idol, the darling, the victim of the whole assemblage. Every one wished to monopolize her. Some bespoke sweetmeats and some promised her visits; this one talked of her relative, Mother So-and-So, and that one of Mother So-and-So with whom she was acquainted; one commended the climate of Monza and another expatiated rapturously upon the great figure she would make there. Still others, who had not yet been able to force their way through this besieging throng, stood ready to seize the first chance of putting themselves forward and pined with regret until the moment arrived to present their respects. Little by little the guests ebbed away. Off they all went, their regrets a thing of the past, and Gertrude remained alone with her parents and brother.

"At last," said the prince, "I have had the consolation of seeing my daughter come into her own. It must be confessed, though, that she hath done herself credit, too. She has shown how natural it will be for her to exercise superiority and maintain the prestige of the family."

They made a hurried supper, so as to retire without delay and be ready early on the following morning. Gertrude, sad of heart, out of patience and, at the same time, a trifle heady from all the compliments of the evening, recalled at this juncture all she had suffered at the hands of the jailer; and, seeing her father so disposed to gratify her in all, save one thing only, she resolved to profit by her ascendancy over him to appease at least one of the passions that tormented her. So she gave expression to her great aversion for her companion, complaining bitterly of her bad manners.

"What!" exclaimed the prince. "She hath failed in respect! Then tomorrow shall she be served, no later than tomorrow. Trust me to make her realize what she is and what thou art. At all events no daughter with whom I am so well pleased should have to see any one about her whom she dislikes." So saying, he summoned another woman and gave her orders to wait upon

Gertrude; who, in the meantime, was astounded, in savoring the satisfaction she had received, to find it taste so insipid in comparison with the craving that preceded it. The sentiment which filled her soul to overflowing, and that in spite of herself, was the thought of the progress which she had that day made on the road to the cloister, and the further conviction that the strength and decision which would now be required to withdraw were much greater than what would have sufficed a few days ago but exceeded her powers even then.

The woman who accompanied her to her room was an old servant who had been the young prince's governess from the time he left his cradle until adolescence, and who had centered in him all her joy, her hopes and her pride. That day's developments were as welcome to her as a piece of personal good fortune, and Gertrude, as a final entertainment, was fain to lend an ear to the old beldame's congratulations, and to hear tell of aunts and great-aunts that had blessed their lot, because, being of her house, they had always enjoyed first honors and, though nuns, had known how to pull the strings of secular affairs and thus from their parlor had achieved things which the greatest ladies had not been able to compass in their stately halls. Then came a recital of the visits she would receive. At last the young prince would come with his bride, who would surely be a great lady, and on that day not only the convent, but the whole town, would be in a hubbub. The old woman talked all the time she was undressing Gertrude, when she was abed, and she was still talking when Gertrude had fallen asleep. Youth and fatigue had proved stronger than thought. Her sleep was troubled, feverish, haunted by harassing dreams, but it was not broken until the shrill voice of the old serving-woman summoned her to prepare for the ride to Monza.

"Come, rise up, your ladyship; 'tis broad daylight, and 'twill take at least an hour to dress you and make your toilet. The princess is dressing now; she was awakened four hours earlier than her wont. The young prince hath been down to the stables and back again and is ready for the road at the first signal. The rascal, he is as nimble as a rabbit. He hath been so from an

infant up; and no one should know it better than I, who carried him in my arms. But, once he is ready, 'tis ill to keep him waiting, because, though his heart is the best in the world, he then stamps and scolds. Poor child, he must be indulged, for it's his nature. Nor would he be altogether to blame this time, since 'tis you who are putting him about. Woe be to any that crosses his path in such moods. His anger spareth none, barring only his highness, the prince. Which same he'll be one day, himself—may it be many a long year yet! But bestir yourself, my lady. Why do you look at me so? You should be out of your nest at this hour."

At this picture of the young hotspur prince, all the other waking thoughts which swarmed into Gertrude's mind scattered suddenly, like a flock of swallows at the appearance of the kite. She obediently dressed without more delay, allowed her hair to be arranged and presented herself before her parents and brother in the breakfast-hall. She was then installed in a great chair and served with a cup of chocolate, which, in those times, corresponded with the donning of the *toga virilis* among the Romans.

When word arrived that the horses were hitched, the prince drew his daughter aside and said: "Come, Gertrude, yesterday you did yourself credit, but you must surpass yourself today. It is question of a solemn entry into the convent and town where you are destined to be the principal personage. They expect you"—it is needless to say that the prince had sent an announcement to the abbess the day before—"they expect you, and all their eyes will be upon you. Be dignified, but easy of manner. The abbess will ask what you wish; such is the form prescribed. You may answer that you wish to be admitted to wear the habit in that convent where you have been so affectionately raised and where you have received so many marks of favor—which is the pure truth. Speak these few words frankly and naturally, so that it need not be said they have been put into your mouth and that you have not a tongue of your own. The good mothers know naught of what hath befallen—it is a secret to be buried in the bosom of the family; and hence wear no sheepish nor hang-dog look to rouse suspicion. Show what blood runneth in your veins.

Be affable and unassuming; but remember that, outside of your own family, you have not a peer in the place."

Without pausing for a reply, the prince started down the stairs, followed by Gertrude and his consort and heir, and entered the carriage. The troubles and vexations of the world and the blessedness of a cloistered life, particularly for girls of noble birth, were the theme of conversation during the trip. As they drew near their destination, the prince renewed his instructions to his daughter and reiterated again and again the formula of her reply. Gertrude felt her heart sink within her as they entered Monza, but her attention was momentarily diverted by some gentlemen or other who stopped the carriage to pay their compliments. Upon starting up again they went the rest of the way to the convent at a foot's pace, followed by the eyes of the curious who flocked upon the road from all sides. Gertrude felt a new and deeper sinking at her heart when at last the carriage stopped and those well-known walls again confronted her. They passed, on alighting, through a lane which the footmen opened up in the crowd. The scrutiny of so many eyes obliged the luckless maiden to study her deportment without a moment's intermission; but those which awed her soul more than all the others combined were her own father's, which fascinated even while they terrified her and governed every movement of her body and every expression of her countenance as if by invisible reins.

They crossed the first courtyard, and, upon entering an inner one, they saw the door of the cloister proper thrown wide open and the aperture filled with religious. In front was the abbess surrounded by the elders of the community, behind them the rank and file, some of them on tiptoe, and in the rear, standing on benches, the converse-sisters. Here and there little eyes twinkled in mid-air and little faces peered forth from among the habits. They were the more enterprising and venturesome of the pupils, who had squirmed their way between the nuns and thus gained a vantage-point from which they too might see something of what was going on. The whole hive was now buzzing with acclamation, and a waving of many hands betokened their

welcome and joy. They are finally at the door and Gertrude is face to face with the mother-abbess. After the first greetings the latter, with a mingled air of cheerfulness and solemnity, asked her what it was she desired there where none could refuse her aught.

"I am come—" Gertrude began; but just at the point of pronouncing the words that would seal her destiny well-nigh irrevocably she paused an instant, her gaze riveted upon the crowd in front of her. In that instant she saw one of her old companions looking at her with a mingled air of pity and scorn, as who should say: Hah! my brave lady; where is your courage now? That sight revived all the sentiments she had cherished in days gone by, and some sparks of her former spirit flamed up in her breast. She was already casting about for some reply, no matter what, other than the one which had been dictated to her, when, looking up at her father as if to measure her strength, she read on his countenance such deep alarm and ominous impatience that, taking counsel of her fear, she pursued with the precipitancy of one fleeing from an object of horror: "I am come to ask permission to be clothed in the religious habit here in this monastery where I have been so affectionately raised." The abbess made haste to reply that it grieved her not to be able to give an immediate answer, which, according to their rule, must follow the suffrage of the community and the authorization of their superiors; that, however, Gertrude, knowing what their feeling was towards her, might guess to a certainty what the answer would be; and that, meanwhile, no rule forbade her, the abbess, and her fellow-sisters from manifesting their consolation at receiving such an application. Cheers and congratulations rose in a confused chorus.

Then came great salvers of sweetmeats, which were offered first to Gertrude and afterwards to the family. While some of the nuns were seeking to make their own of the new postulant and others were complimenting the mother or the young prince, the abbess sent to the father requesting him to come to the latticed window of the parlor, where she waited on him, accompanied by two of the older religious. When he appeared, "Your

highness," she said, "out of obedience to our rule—in fulfilment of a formality which is indispensable, though in the present instance, of course—still it is my duty to tell you—that, whenever a daughter seeks to be clothed in the habit, the superior—whose place I unworthily fill—is bound to warn the parents—that if, perchance, they forced her consent, they would incur excommunication.[1] I crave your highness' pardon, but——"

"Nay, nay, reverend mother. I commend your punctiliousness. It is as it should be. But you cannot suspect me——"

"Oh, your highness! It is not I but my duty which spoke thus. As for myself——"

"Yes, yes; to be sure, mother-abbess."

After this brief exchange of words the interlocutors bowed to each other and separating, as if it oppressed them to remain there face to face, they started off to rejoin their parties, the one without and the other within the boundary of the cloister.

"Come, come," urged the prince. "Gertrude can enjoy the good mother's company to her heart's content anon, but we have inconvenienced them enough for the present." So saying, he bowed and his family rose up to go with him. There was another round of complimenting, and then they set off.

Gertrude felt little inclination to converse on the journey back. Appalled at the step she had taken, mortified at her pusillanimity and out of temper with the world and with herself, she sorrowfully took stock of the occasions which still remained of negativing her consent, vaguely promising herself that in this or that or the other juncture she would be firmer and more skilful. But, with all these preoccupations, the fear of the father's frown had not entirely forsaken her; so that, when a furtive glance at his features informed her that all traces of wrath had cleared away,

[1] [The Church's anathema applied, not only to parents who forced the veil on their daughters, but to all "who lent their advice, assistance or favor" to the practice, or who recognized it "by their presence, their consent or the exercise of their authority."—Council of Trent, Session XXV, Chapter XVIII, Dec. 3–4, 1563. Deterrent legislation on this head extends back as far as the fifth century, one of the decrees of Pope Leo I (440–461) being aimed at the same abuse.—Decretum Gratiani, Secunda Pars, Causa XX, Questio I.—TRANSLATOR.]

leaving only a look of intense gratification in its wake, the world for one instant looked bright again and her heart was glad.

Costumes had to be changed and the toilet remade as soon as they reached home. Then came dinner, then a few visits, then the drive; followed by the afternoon reception and supper. Towards the end of the meal the prince introduced a new topic, the selection of the sponsor. She who went by this name was a lady who at the request of the parents became the young postulant's guardian and escort in the interval between the making of the application and entering the convent. The time was spent in attending receptions and visiting churches and galleries, villas and sanctuaries, in a word, in making acquaintance with all the attractions of the town and its environs, so that aspirants, before binding themselves by an irrevocable vow, might see for themselves the things upon which they were turning their backs. "We must give thought to a sponsor," said the prince. "The nuns' vicar comes tomorrow for the formality of Gertrude's examination, and immediately afterwards the chapter will pass upon her candidacy and accept her." In speaking, he had turned towards the princess, and she, thinking that it was a cue to make suggestions, was beginning: "There is—" But the prince cut her off. "No, no, my lady; the sponsor must first of all be to the liking of her ward; and, albeit constant use hath given the choice to parents, still Gertrude's prudence and maturity of mind are such as to warrant an exception being made in her favor." Hereupon, turning to Gertrude with the air of one announcing a singular favor, he continued: "Any of the ladies who were at this afternoon's reception would make a fitting sponsor for a daughter of our house, nor is there one, I believe, who would not hold it an honor to be selected. Make choice yourself."

Gertrude saw that the exercise of such a prerogative meant a renewal of her consent, but the proposal had been so elaborately made that it might seem contemptuous, or at least capricious and wilful, for her to refuse, no matter how humble her expressions. So she took the step. She named the lady whom she had found most congenial that afternoon, that is to say, the one who had been most profuse with endearments and praise

and who had treated her with that mixture of familiarity, affection and solicitude which, in the first moments of acquaintance, passes muster for deep friendship. "An admirable selection," quoth the prince, who desired and expected no other. Whether it was chance or art, it had come about as when a juggler passes a deck of cards before our eyes, telling us to think of a card and that he will guess it; but he has contrived that we shall see but one. This lady had been so inseparable from Gertrude that afternoon and so filled her mind that it would have needed an effort of the imagination to think of any one else. Then again, her assiduity was not without reasons. She had long ago marked the young prince for her son-in-law. So she regarded the concerns of his house as her own and took a no less natural interest in dear Gertrude than her next of kin.

Gertrude awoke next day with the thought of the coming examination in her mind; and, while she was wondering whether she might not seize upon this decisive episode to turn back and how, the prince summoned her. "Well, daughter," he said, "you have borne yourself incomparably up to the present; but today the crown is to be set to the work. Your consent hath gone with whatever hath taken place thus far. If in all this time any misgiving, any regret or youthful vagary had arisen in your mind, you should have spoken; but at the stage which matters have now reached it is too late for childishness. The worthy priest who is coming this morning will ply you with endless questions about your vocation, and whether you go to a nunnery of your own free will, and why, and wherefore, and God knows what not. If you falter in your replies, he will keep you on the rack to the end of the chapter. That would be irksome and distressing in itself, but a worse calamity might ensue. After all the public demonstrations that have been, the slightest hesitation to be observed in you would bring my honor into question. People might believe that I had taken a whim of yours for a serious resolution, that I had acted precipitately, that I had—but why continue? In such an event I would be confronted by a painful alternative—either to let the world think scorn of me (a course

that consisteth not with what I owe to myself), or else to reveal the true motive of your resolution and——"

But at this point, seeing Gertrude turn crimson, her eyes fill with tears and her countenance shrivel up like the petals of a flower in the sultriness which precedes a tempest, he dropped the subject and serenely resumed: "Come, come; all rests with you and your discretion. I know you have no lack of it. You are not a child, to mar results already accomplished, but I had to foresee every contingency. Let us say no more, and meanwhile let it be agreed between us that you will answer with an air of candor, so as to breed no doubts in the mind of the worthy vicar. Thus, too, you will be quit of him all the sooner." Hereupon, after suggesting some replies to the more likely interrogations, he broached the usual topic of the delights and the enjoyments which awaited Gertrude in the convent and detained her with descriptions of them until a servant announced the vicar. The prince hurriedly renewed the more important of his warnings and then left his daughter alone with the ecclesiastic, as the law prescribed.

The vicar came to the palace with his mind disposed to believe that Gertrude had a decided vocation to the cloister, for so the prince had informed him when he had come to see him in reference to the examination. It is true that the good priest, who knew that caution was one of the cardinal virtues of his office, held to the principle of being slow to believe in such protestations and of guarding against preconceptions; but it occurs very rarely that the mind of a listener is not tinged by the positiveness and assurance of a person of authority, be the subject what it may.

After the first greetings were exchanged, "Your ladyship," he said, "I am coming to play the devil's advocate. My mission is to cast doubts upon what in your application you have given for a certainty, and to ascertain whether you have considered the difficulties which I shall represent to you. Under your favor I shall now put you some questions."

"I am listening," replied Gertrude.

The good man then began to interrogate her in the prescribed

form. "Do you feel in your heart a free and spontaneous desire to become a religious? Have no threats nor blandishments been used? Has no pressure of authority been brought to bear upon your resolution? Speak out unreservedly and sincerely to a man whose duty is to know your real will and prevent it from suffering violence in any way."

The true reply to such inquiries flashed before Gertrude's mind with terrible clearness. But this reply entailed explanations, the recital of the threats which had been used, the telling of her whole story. The wretched girl recoiled in horror from the idea. She cast about hurriedly for a different kind of reply, but she could lay her hand to only one that would deliver her quickly and securely from the ordeal, and that one the furthest from the truth. "I am becoming a religious," she answered, dissembling her agitation—"I am becoming a religious of my own accord and freely."

"How long have you felt such a desire?" continued the priest.

"I have always had it," replied Gertrude, emboldened to lying after taking the first step.

"But what is your chief reason for wishing to be a religious?"

The worthy priest little knew what a terrible chord he touched. Gertrude made a violent effort to keep her face from showing the effect the words produced in her soul. "My reason," she said, "is to serve God and fly the dangers of the world."

"Not, peradventure, out of disappointment or—under your favor—caprice? At times some transitory situation creates an impression which appears to be lasting, but when the occasion ceases and the mind's attitude changes, then——"

"Nay, nay," Gertrude precipitately answered; "my motives are what I have told you."

The vicar, more to be thorough in the fulfilment of his duties than out of any necessity which he felt for it, pushed on with his interrogatories; but Gertrude was bent upon deception. Besides the repugnance she felt to revealing her weakness to the grave, God-fearing priest, who seemed so far from suspecting such things of her, it occurred to her, moreover, that he could, indeed, prevent her from becoming a nun, but that there his authority

over her and his power of protection ended. Once he went, she would remain alone with the prince. And, suffer as she might, he would know naught of what might be inflicted on her at home, or, knowing it, he would not, with all his good-will, be able to extend her more than his compassion—that measured, easy-going compassion which is generally dispensed by way of courtesy to those whose actions have furnished the provocation, or at least the pretext for the ills they suffer. He was weary of questioning before she tired of lying. Finding her replies consistent throughout and having no reason to suspect their sincerity, he at length changed his tone, congratulating her and, in a manner, asking her pardon for the inroads which his duties made upon her time. He added what he thought fittest to confirm her in her resolution and took his departure.

In going through the halls on his way out, he came upon the prince, who seemed to be there by chance, and him, too, he congratulated upon the daughter's good disposition. Up to that moment the prince had been in the throes of suspense. At such news he breathed freely again. Forgetting his habitual gravity, he almost ran to where Gertrude was and loaded her with encomiums, with caresses and promises for the future in an access of genuine enthusiasm and tenderness that was, in great part, sincere. The human heart is, truly, a rare conglomerate.

We shall not follow Gertrude in the round of spectacles and diversions that ensued. Neither shall we describe minutely and in their order the sentiments which filled her mind during all this time. It would be a story of pain and wavering too monotonous to relate and too much like what has already been told. The beauty of the scenes, the variety of the objects, the diversion of rushing hither and thither in the open air, rendered still more odious the thought of that place where she was to alight for the last time and for good. Still more poignant were the impressions made on her by receptions and festive gatherings. At the sight of brides to whom the title was given its more obvious and usual meaning, she felt an insupportable envy and anguish, and sometimes the sight of still other faces made her feel that it would be the height of happiness to hear that title applied to herself.

At times the pomp of palaces and the splendor of their appointments or the joyous stir and uproar of parties so intoxicated her with happiness and life that she vowed to recant and suffer everything rather than return within the chill and death-like shadow of the cloister. But all such resolutions evaporated upon a cooler consideration of the difficulties or one look at her father's face. At other times the thought of having to leave all these enjoyments forever rendered this brief taste of them bitter and grievous, just as an invalid suffering from the pangs of thirst regards with rage, and almost rejects in disdain, the spoonful of water that the doctor reluctantly administers.

Meanwhile the nuns' vicar had given the necessary certificate, and authorization came to hold the chapter for Gertrude's acceptance. The chapter met, and as was to be expected, the secret ballot gave her the required two-thirds majority, and she was accepted. She herself, wearied by the long conflict, asked to enter the convent as soon as possible. There was certainly no one to forbid such impatience. So she had her wish. She was led to the convent with much pomp and there donned the habit of a religious. After twelve months of novitiate, crowded with regrets and counter-regrets, she found herself facing the moment of profession—the moment, that is, when she was fain to make a retraction that would be more surprising and scandalous than ever, or else repeat the affirmative to which her lips were so accustomed. She repeated it, and became a religious forever.

It is one of the singular and distinctive traits of the Christian religion that it can afford direction and consolation to any one, no matter in what juncture or dilemma he turns to it. If the past admits of a remedy, it prescribes and furnishes the remedy and gives the light and strength to apply it at whatever cost; if no remedy is possible, it brings about what the proverb advises and makes a virtue of necessity. It teaches how to prosecute with wisdom that which was undertaken in levity; it induces the soul to take up cheerfully a yoke that was imposed by arrogant injustice, and endows a decision which was rash but is now irrevocable with all the holiness, all the prudence, nay, all the joys of a downright vocation. It is a path of such a description

that, no matter from what labyrinth or precipice a man comes out upon it, once he takes the initial step, he can thereafter tread in safety and contentment and come happily to a good end.

By such means Gertrude might have been a holy and resigned religious, no matter what the manner of her becoming one. But the poor wretch fretted under her yoke, which thus became all the heavier and more galling. To repine for her lost liberty, to cherish abhorrence for her present state, to brood painfully over desires which would never be gratified—such were the chief occupations of her mind. She ruminated over the bitter past, reconstructing in her memory the various circumstances to which she owed that she was where she was, and a thousand times undid in thought that which she had done in fact. She accused herself of pusillanimity and others of tyranny and perfidy, and thus she ate her heart away. Deploring, while she idolized, her beauty, she lamented her youth, destined to waste away by a slow martyrdom, and in certain moods she would gladly have exchanged places with any woman of the world who could enjoy, unhampered, these same gifts at no matter what sacrifice of station or honor.

She hated the sight of those nuns who had had a hand in ensnaring her. The wiles and scheming they had employed came up before her, and she repaid them amply with incivility, ill temper and open objurgations. They generally had no choice but to swallow their anger and be silent; because the prince, while he had tyrannized over his daughter as far as his purpose of forcing her into the convent had required, would not so easily have allowed the claims of any one else to prevail against his flesh and blood. Their least outcry might forfeit his patronage or even turn his protection into enmity. It would appear that Gertrude should have been drawn somewhat to the rest of the sisters, who had had no share in the intrigue and who, without having desired her for a companion, loved her as such and showed her by their example of industry, piety and cheerfulness how life in such surroundings might be made not only tolerable but pleasant. But even they were odious to her on another score. Their air of piety and contentment struck her as a rebuke to

her own restlessness and capriciousness, and so she never let an opportunity go by of ridiculing them as fanatics behind their backs or abusing them as hypocrites. Her aversion might, perhaps, have been less could she have known or guessed that the few black balls cast into the urn at the time of her acceptance had been deposited by them.

She seemed to find some consolation at times in parading her power and seeing it courted in the convent, in receiving visitors from outside, in succeeding with some undertaking and exploiting her protection, or even in hearing herself addressed as "Your ladyship." But what consolation it was! From time to time her hungry heart would fain have eked out such satisfactions with the consolations of religion, but these come only to him who forsakes the former—just as a shipwrecked sailor, if he would seize the plank that may bring him safe to shore, must loose his grip and let go the seaweed which he had grasped in a moment of panic.

Soon after her profession Gertrude had been made mistress of scholars. The reader is left to imagine how young girls fared under such discipline. Her former confidantes had all left, but all the old impulses remained unabated, and, in one way or another, her charges had to bear the brunt of them. When she reflected that many of them were destined to live in that world from which she was forever excluded, her heart filled with envy towards her innocent rivals and almost with a desire for vengeance. She browbeat them, hectored them, made them pay for every one of those pleasures they would some day enjoy. One would have thought, to hear the imperious indignation with which she reproved their slightest fault at such times, that she was a woman of extravagant, fanatical spirituality. At other times the same abhorrence for the cloister, the rule, the law of obedience, broke forth in sallies of an entirely contrary humor. She then not only tolerated the noisy dissipation of her pupils but egged them on. She mingled in their games, and recklessness broke all bounds. She took part in their conversation and went further than the boldest. If one of them brought up the mother-abbess' style of talking, she mimicked her at great length and

turned the episode into a scene from a comedy, caricaturing one sister's facial expression and another's gait. Then she would laugh boisterously, but it was laughter that left her no happier than before. She had lived thus for several years without any opportunity or temptation arising to do worse, when at length, to her sorrow, the temptation presented itself.

Among the other distinctions and privileges conceded her in compensation for the abbesship she could not enjoy, was that of having her quarters apart from the rest. The convent, on this side, adjoined a house tenanted by a young man who was a professional criminal—one of the many who in those times could, through their minions and their confederacy with other criminals, set justice and the forces of the law at defiance, at least up to a certain point. Our manuscript calls him simply Egidio, without any patronymic. Having from his window, which looked out upon a courtyard belonging to the wing inhabited by Gertrude, seen her passing by or strolling around at sundry times, and being rather attracted than alarmed by the danger and the impiousness of his project, he one day addressed her. The wretched nun replied.

At first she experienced a feeling of keen, but surely not unmixed, satisfaction. The dreary void within her soul became filled with a constant and engrossing interest—indeed, one might almost say, with a new and exuberant life. But her satisfaction was like those stimulants which the ingenious cruelty of the ancients used to administer to condemned criminals to enable them to bear their tortures. At the same time her conduct underwent great modifications. She became all at once more regular and her disposition more equable. Her sarcasms and grumbling ceased and she even showed herself affable and affectionate, so that the other nuns rejoiced at the happy change which had been wrought. So far were they from guessing the real reason for the transformation or understanding that this new-born virtue was nothing more than hypocrisy taking its place alongside of the other vices that infected her. This illusion, however,—this fairness without, so to speak,—did not continue long—not, at least, with the same constancy. Soon her old aver-

sions and caprices cropped out anew, and the convent was reprobated and vilified as a prison, at times in language which sounded strange in such a place and even from such lips. Still every one of these sallies was followed by remorse and great eagerness to efface their memory by dint of palaver and cajolery. The sisters endured all these vagaries as best they might, attributing them to the fickle, impulsive character of her ladyship.

For a time it appears that no one thought of the matter more seriously. But one day, when her ladyship, in the course of an altercation with a lay sister over some trifle or other, became abusive beyond all reason and measure, the latter, after biting her lips and suffering in silence for a while, at last lost patience and intimated that she knew something which she would reveal at the proper time and place. From that moment her ladyship knew no peace. One morning, shortly after, they waited in vain for the lay sister at her accustomed place. Her cell was searched —she was not there. They called her name loudly, but there was no reply. Every corner was ferreted out and the place was ransacked from top to bottom. All to no purpose—she was nowhere to be found. It is hard to say where speculation would have ended had not their quest disclosed a breach in the wall of the garden, through which every one now became satisfied that she had escaped. They scoured the country in and around Monza, particularly in Meda, her native town, and wrote in every direction, but without ever obtaining the slightest clue. Perhaps the spade might have unearthed at home the secret they vainly pursued at a distance. After much wondering—because no one would have deemed her capable of such a thing—and much wagging of tongues, it was finally decided that she must have gone afar off; and, one sister having ventured the opinion that she had certainly fled to Holland, it was given out and believed for a while both in the convent and outside that Holland was really her hiding-place.

Her ladyship, however, seems not to have shared in this opinion. Not, indeed, that she gave evidence of not believing it or that she ever combated it with her own private convictions. If she had any, certainly never were private convictions better

concealed. Neither was there any subject she was so loath to broach, any mystery she was less anxious to fathom. But the less she said the busier were her thoughts. How many times in the day did not the dead woman's image rise up suddenly before her mind like a spectre that would not down! How often would she not have preferred to see the reality standing there in the flesh to the company of that fearful impalpable shadow, this constant brooding of her thoughts on one subject? How often would she not have wished to hear her victim's voice, no matter what doom she might pronounce, rather than be listening forever to the ghostly tones of the same voice in her inner consciousness, whispering, whispering, whispering, with an inexorableness to which human persistence could never attain!

It was a year after this event that Lucia was presented to her ladyship and had the conversation at which our narrative was interrupted. The religious plied her with endless questions about Don Rodrigo's persecution and entered into certain details with a recklessness that Lucia, who had never imagined that the curiosity of nuns could concern itself with such topics, found—and with good reason found—unprecedented. The comments with which she interlarded her queries, or which she implied if she did not express, were just as strange. She almost seemed to laugh at Lucia's loathing for the noble, asking her if he were a monstrosity, that she should be so much afraid of him, and apparently she would have found the maiden's repugnance silly and unreasonable had not her preference for Renzo furnished a motive. On this head, also, her inquisitiveness caused her interlocutor to gasp and blush. Then, perceiving that the aberrations of her fancy had led her too far afield, she sought to explain away her compromising loquacity; but all her quibbling did not remove the bewilderment and vague dread that this nastiness had inspired in Lucia. Hardly was the latter alone with her mother than she opened up on the subject; but Agnese, in right of her greater experience, with a few words solved all her daughter's doubts and cleared up the whole mystery. "When you know this world as well as I do," she said, "you will see that these are no great matters for surprise. These gentles all have

a streak of craziness in them, some more and some less, some in one direction and some in another. You must let them talk as they list, particularly when you have an axe to grind, and take them just as seriously as if they spoke sense. You heard how she rated me, as though I had uttered blasphemies. Still I let it in one ear and out the other. They are all alike. But, with all that, Heaven be thanked that this great lady seems to have taken a liking to you and is inclined to protect us. As for the rest, if you live long, my daughter, and your lot is cast much with the quality, you'll learn, you'll learn, you'll learn."

The desire of obliging the father-guardian, the flattering rôle of playing the protectress, the credit that could be reaped from championing so holy a cause, a certain predilection for Lucia and also a sense of relief in doing good to an innocent creature and in succoring and comforting the oppressed, had really disposed her ladyship to make her own the cause of the two fugitives. At her request and out of deference to her importance, they were lodged in the portress' quarters adjoining the cloister and treated as if they were in the employment of the convent. Mother and daughter congratulated each other on having so quickly found an honorable and safe retreat. They would also fain have remained unknown of every one; but the thing was not easy in a convent—the less so that there lived a man who was only too concerned about obtaining news of one of them and whose soul, in addition to the passion of lust and the eagerness to win his point which had animated him before, was now spurred on, besides, by the rage he felt at having been thwarted and outwitted.

Let us now take our leave of the two women in their asylum and return to Don Rodrigo's castle during the interval when he was awaiting the outcome of his iniquitous expedition.

Chapter XI

Like a pack of hounds returning crestfallen to their master after chasing a hare which has eluded them, with heads hanging down and tails between their legs, the bravos returned to Don Rodrigo's castle on that night when confusion reigned so supreme. He was pacing to and fro in the darkness an unused upper chamber which gave upon the terrace. Every now and then he would pause, strain his ears and peer out through the chinks of the worm-eaten shutters which defended the windows. He was bursting with impatience and not altogether free from disquietude over the uncertainty of success and also the consequences which might possibly ensue; because this was the most high-handed and daring piece of business on which this worthy gentleman had yet ventured. Still he went on reassuring himself with the thought of the precautions which had been taken to remove every trace, if not every suspicion, of the crime. "As for suspicions," he mused, "why, a fig for their suspicions. Who will be overweening enough to come up hither and inquire whether there is a wench about the place or no? The friar? Let him come! Her lout of a lover? Let him come, and welcome! Her dam? Let the dam go to Bergamo! The law? Bah, the law! The podestà is not a child or a fool. And at Milan? Who recks of such folk at Milan? Who would give ear to them? Who knows of their existence? They are as good as lost to the world. They haven't even a patron to stand sponsor for them—they are nobody's. Then, farewell fear! What will Attilio say tomorrow? He'll see now whether I am an idle prater or not. Then too, in the event of a broil—who knows? Some enemy might seize upon this as a pretext—I shall have Attilio to advise with. The honor of the family pledges him to it." But the thought upon which he dwelt the longest, because it at the same time beguiled his doubts and pandered to his paramount passion, was of the wiles and promises he

should make use of to conciliate Lucia. "She will take such a fright at being here alone with this scurvy, ill-favored pack—the least ogreish of all am I, b'yr Lady—that she will naturally turn to me and sue for mercy. And, if she sues——"

At this point in his calculations he heard footsteps, and, going to the window, he opened it part way and thrust out his head. They were there. And the litter? Why, where the foul fiend was the litter? Three, five, eight—the full muster, even Griso; and the litter missing. Hell's fury! Griso shall answer for it.

Upon entering, Griso deposited his pilgrim's staff in a corner of a chamber on the ground-floor, laid aside his cockle-hat and mantle and in pursuance of a duty which no one envied him at that moment mounted the stairs to report to Don Rodrigo. Don Rodrigo was awaiting him at the top, and, seeing him shambling up with the gawkish mien of a baffled rogue, "Well," he said, or rather bawled, "Sir Braggart, Sir Captain, Sir Leave-it-to-me?"

" 'Tis hard," replied Griso, resting one foot on the top step—" 'tis hard, after risking one's neck in serving faithfully and trying to accomplish one's duty, to meet with reproof."

"How has it sped? Let us hear, let us hear," quoth Don Rodrigo, turning towards his chamber, whither Griso followed him and began the recital of his dispositions and movements—what he had seen or failed to see, what he had heard, what he feared and what he had done to save the situation. His narrative bore traces of the incoherence, the confusion, the dubiety and the amazement which reigned perforce among his ideas.

"The blame is not to thee; thou playedst thy part well," said Don Rodrigo at the close. "Thou hast done what thou couldst, but—but—that my house should shelter a spy! If it be so, and if so be I discover him, and discover him we will if he exists, I'll pay him home. I tell you, Griso, I'll tear him limb from limb."

"The same suspicion crossed my own mind," commented Griso. "If it be true, and a caitiff of such a stripe comes to light, your lordship must leave him to me. 'Tis fitting I should settle scores with the joker who hath made me pass a night such

as this. Still from various indications I surmise that there must be some other intrigue towards, which for the present doth not appear. Tomorrow all will be clear."

"At least, you were not recognized?"

Griso replied that he hoped not; and the upshot of the interview was that Don Rodrigo gave him three commissions for the morrow which would very readily have occurred to Griso himself: to send two men early in the morning to the consul to serve him the injunction we have already noted; to send two more to patrol the haunted house and keep prying eyes from seeing the litter until it could be fetched back the following night, any further moves being for the present inadvisable as liable to cause suspicion; and next, to go himself and send the shrewdest and most plausible of his myrmidons to mingle with the villagers and nose out something in regard to the hurly-burly of the night before. These orders given, Don Rodrigo sought his bedchamber and left Griso to seek his, dismissing him with many encomiums, from an evident desire to indemnify him for the hasty reprimands with which he had been received.

Go, Griso, and take the sleep of which thou hast such sore need! Poor Griso! About thy master's business all the day and half of the night, to say naught of the danger of falling into the clutches of the peasants or of having another price set upon thy already well-mortgaged head *ob raptum mulieris honestae,* and then to be received in such wise! Well, that is often the way that man repayeth his fellow-man. Thou mayest have observed, though, that justice may indeed be delayed, but that, sooner or later, it prevaileth even here below. Go now and take thy rest, and some day thou mayest furnish us with a more signal proof of this same truth.

On the following morning Griso was abroad before Don Rodrigo arose. The latter at once sought out Count Attilio, who, on seeing him appear, at once assumed an attitude of raillery and shouted out: "Martinmas!"

"I am at a loss what to say," replied Don Rodrigo, coming up to him. "Thou hast won the wager, but 'tis not that which irks me most. I had said naught to thee, because I confess I

had hoped to see thee discomfited this morning. But—well, now I shall tell thee all."

"The friar hath had a hand in this," said the cousin, after having heard the story through with more seriousness than could have been augured of such a madcap. "I put that monk down for a knave and a busybody, for all his milk-sop manner and his drivelling cant. And thou hast not admitted me to thy trust nor told me plainly what humbuggery brought him hither the other day." Don Rodrigo related the dialogue. "And thou hadst so much forbearance?" exclaimed Count Attilio. "He went as he came?"

"Wouldst thou have had me bring all the Capuchins of Italy about my ears?"

"I know not," said Count Attilio, "if at the moment I should have remembered whether there were any other Capuchins in the world besides the rash scoundrel in front of me. But come; is there no method of giving a Capuchin his deserts that consisteth with the laws of prudence? It needs only to redouble one's kindnesses to the whole body, and one can baste a single member with impunity. Enough said! He hath escaped the punishment that suited him best, but now I take him under my protection. I want the consolation of teaching him how to speak with those of our rank."

"Do not make matters worse."

"Trust me this once, and I'll serve thee as a kinsman and friend. I know not yet, but I shall certainly pay the friar home. I shall think it over and— Our uncle, the count and member of the privy council, must turn the trick. My dear honorable uncle! How I revel in making him work for me, a statesman of his calibre! The day after tomorrow I shall be in Milan, and by hook or by crook the monk shall get his due."

Breakfast, which followed, did not interrupt discussion upon so important a matter. Count Attilio spoke his mind freely; and although he regulated his conduct as friendship for his cousin and the honor of their common name demanded,—according to the ideas he entertained of friendship and honor,—still he could not refrain from laughing up his sleeve at the fiasco.

But Don Rodrigo, whose own the case was and who, while contemplating stealing a march, had suffered such a spectacular failure, was agitated by graver emotions and more troublesome thoughts. "Fine matter for gossip the churls will have through the whole country-side," he said. "But what skills it? As for the law, I laugh at it. Proofs are lacking, and even if they were not, I would laugh equally. As was right, I had a warning served on the consul this morning to beware of reporting upon the occurrence. Nothing would come of it, but protracted gabbling bores me. 'Tis already too much that I have been gulled so preposterously."

"Well thought on," replied Count Attilio. "And that precious podestà—mule, blockhead, insufferable bore that he is—is still a good sort, the kind who knows his duty, and this is just the class whose faces we should be most careful to save when we have dealings with them. If that varlet of a consul maketh a report upon the proceedings, the podestà, for all that he meaneth well, will be fain to——"

"And still," petulantly interrupted Don Rodrigo, "thou art forever marring my interests by contradicting him and making him the butt of thy raillery and invective. Why the foul fiend can a podestà not be arbitrary and obstinate, if he is the right sort when occasion needs?"

"Dost thou know, coz," said Count Attilio, with amazement on his brow, "that I begin to believe thou art somewhat touched by fear? Dost thou actually take the podestà so seriously——"

"Zounds! Hast thou not thyself said that he must not be ignored?"

"I have; and when the matter is serious, I shall show thee I am no trifler. Dost thou know to what lengths I am willing to go for thee? I do not stick at paying a visit in person to his worship the podestà. Will he feel honored or not? Eh? Nay, I do not even stick at letting him prate for half an hour of Duke Olivares and the Spanish commandant and of acceding to all his claims for them, even though they be as gross as mountains. I shall then let fall a remark about our uncle in the privy council, and thou knowest well what bee that will put in his bonnet.

After all, he hath more need of our patronage than you of his clemency. I shall be all goodness and leave him better disposed than ever."

After these and other observations of the same kind, Count Attilio went out to hunt, and Don Rodrigo remained anxiously awaiting the return of Griso. At length, towards the dinner hour, he came to make his report.

The pother of the preceding night had been so prodigious and the disappearance of three citizens from a small hamlet an event of such moment that both curiosity and a natural feeling of solicitude guaranteed that inquiry would be eager and persistent; and on the other hand, there were too many in the secret for it to be kept by all. Perpetua could not show her face at the door without being importuned to say who it was that had so frightened her master; and Perpetua, recalling to mind all the circumstances of the occurrence and arriving finally at the conclusion that she had been hoaxed by Agnese, waxed so indignant at the perfidy of the latter that she felt the need of some safety-valve for her own emotions. Not that she dilated indiscriminately upon the manner of her being taken in. On that point she was dumb. But the trick practiced upon her poor master exceeded all her powers of reticence, especially in view of the fact that such trickery had been thought out and put into execution by a respectable youth like Renzo, a model of decorum like the widow and a wax madonna like Lucia. Don Abbondio might command her with all his authority and beg her with all his unction to hold her tongue, and she might declare over and over again that there was no need to suggest a thing so obvious and so natural—certain it is that the secret behaved in her bosom like new wine in an old, badly hooped cask, fermenting and fretting and chafing, until, in default of starting the bung, it oozes out with much frothing and foaming between the staves and distils finally in sufficient quantities on the surface for one to taste it and say with fair certainty what vintage it is.

Gervaso, what with the feeling of unreality at being for once better informed than the rest, the glory of having known such a great fear, and the sensation of equality with other men which

he experienced as a result of having had a finger in something that savored of the criminal, was bursting with the desire to brag of the exploit. And, though Tonio, to whom the thought of investigations, courts and cross-questionings was a serious consideration, enjoined him with fist thrust under his nose to say naught to any one, it was impossible to throttle him midway in every sentence. Besides, Tonio himself, after being abroad at an unwonted hour of the night and returning with unwonted haste in his step and discomposure in his air, and being predisposed to candor by his excited frame of mind, could not conceal the facts from his mate; who, in turn, had a tongue of her own. He who said least was Menico. So terrible did it appear to his parents that a son of theirs should have had a share in wrecking an undertaking of Don Rodrigo's, that hardly did they suffer him to finish his account of the history and object of his errand. They then commanded him in the most solemn terms and under the direst penalties to guard well against dropping even a hint of the affair, and, not feeling sufficiently insured even yet, they decided, on the following morning, to keep him close within doors for that day and several more days thereafter. But, bless your heart! they themselves, in the course of their gossiping with the neighbors and without at all meaning to appear wiser than the rest, let fall as of common knowledge, when speculation boggled at the how and wherefore of the trio's flight and whither they had fled, that they had gone to Pescarenico. Thus even this circumstance became part of the general rumor.

These various scraps of information, when pieced together and augmented by the inevitable embroidery, made a story whose simplicity and logic satisfied even the most critical intellect. What played havoc with this very unexceptionable version of events was the raid of the bravos—an incident too serious and too notorious to be glossed over and too mysterious to be explained. There were muttered mentions of Don Rodrigo. Thus far opinion was unanimous; but the rest was darkness and discrepancy. Frequent references were made to the two desperados who had been seen in the street towards nightfall and to the one in the doorway of the inn; but what intelligence could

be eked out of so meagre a clue as that? Mine host was, of course, questioned as to what guests he had entertained the evening before; but he could not even recall, if his word was to be believed, whether he had seen a single person on that evening, nor did he fail to observe that your inn is just like a seaport. But the pilgrim did more than aught else to puzzle honest heads and disconcert speculation—that pilgrim who had been seen by Stefano and Carlandrea, whom the rufflans wanted to murder, and who then had gone off with them or been carried away by them. On what errand had he come? It was a soul come from purgatory to help the two women, said some. It was the reprobate soul of some scoundrelly mountebank of a pilgrim, said others, who came back by night to join in the marauding of those whose profession he had exercised in life. It was a real pilgrim of flesh and blood, again it was asserted, whom the bravos wished to murder, for fear that he might make an outcry and alarm the village. Or again, it was (what strange notions some people will get into their heads!) one of those same blackguards disguised as a palmer.

It was this, it was that—it was so many things, in fine, that all Griso's sagacity and experience would not have availed to solve the riddle if he had been left to the prating of others to decipher this part of the story. But, as the reader is already aware, that which to every one else was a stumbling-block, was the clearest point in the whole narrative to him; and through it he had the key to the remainder of the information gleaned by himself directly or by his subordinates, and could reconstruct a sufficiently clear account of things for Don Rodrigo. He was immediately summoned to the master's closet and informed him of the lovers' attempted stroke; which offered a natural explanation of the empty cottage and the alarm-bell without any necessity for supposing that there was a spy in the house, as our two worthies had opined. He also informed him of the flight. Here again, motives were not to seek—the fright of the lovers at being caught red-handed, some hint of the raid after its discovery, the panic reigning in the village. Finally, he told him

of the retreat to Pescarenico. Further than that his information did not extend.

Don Rodrigo was pleased to ascertain that he had not been betrayed and to observe that no trace remained of his exploit; but his gratification was brief and unsubstantial. "Fled together!" he cried. "Together! And that villain of a friar! Hah! that friar!" He gnashed out the word between his teeth in tones that were hoarse with rage, and his face reflected the ugliness of his passions. "That friar shall pay dearly for this. Griso, I must know more—I must find them or my name is not Rodrigo. By evening I must know where they are. I have no peace. To Pescarenico out of hand, and be all eyes and ears till they are found. Four *scudi* for the present and my protection for all eternity. This evening I must know their whereabouts. That scoundrel. That friar. . . .!"

Griso again took the field, and by evening of the same day he was able to submit to his worthy patron the desired information. It happened after this manner:

One of the great consolations of the present life is friendship, and one of the consolations of friendship is the confiding of secrets. Now, friends do not come in pairs, like husbands and wives. Generally speaking, everybody has more than one, which gives rise to an endless chain. When, therefore, a friend indulges in the consolation of depositing a secret in the breast of another, he generates in the other a desire to procure similar consolation. He begs him, it is true, to say naught to anyone; and this condition, were it accepted with rigorous literalness, would stop the current of consolation at its very source. But common usage has restricted the obligation to not telling any one but a friend equally trusted and then imposing upon him, in turn, the same condition. Thus, from one trusted friend to another the secret makes the circuit of the whole immense chain, until it at length comes to the ears of him or them from whom the first speaker expressly intended to conceal it. Ordinarily it would take some little time to reach its destination, did each man count but two friends, one to make the confidence and one to receive it. But there are individuals who reckon their friends

by hundreds, and, when a secret falls into the possession of one of these privileged persons, the links multiply so rapidly that it is no longer possible to keep track of its progress. Our author has not been able to ascertain the number of mouths through which passed the secret that Griso was commissioned to hunt down. What cannot be gainsaid is that the good man who had escorted the two women to Monza, returning with his cart about an hour before the Ave Maria to Pescarenico, fell in with a trusted friend of his before reaching home and related to him in strict confidence the good deed he had performed, together with the rest of the story. It is a matter of equal certainty that, two hours later, Griso was in a position to hasten back to the castle and report to Don Rodrigo that Lucia and her mother had taken asylum in a convent of Monza, and that Renzo had continued on to Milan.

This separation afforded unholy joy to Don Rodrigo, who again began to entertain hopes of compassing the iniquitous project. He pondered over the means a great part of the night, and in the morning he arose betimes with two plans in mind, one fragmentary as yet, the other completely matured. The latter was to send Griso post-haste to Monza to get some clearer tidings of Lucia and to discover what might be attempted in that quarter. He, therefore, hastily summoned his henchman, handing him the four *scudi,* again commended the skill by which he had earned them and issued orders for what he meditated further.

"Your lordship——" faltered Griso.

"What? Have I not been plain?"

"If you could send someone else——"

"What?"

"Your lordship, I am ready to risk my neck for my employer. It is no more than my duty. But I know also that you would not expose the lives of your subjects to undue peril."

"Well?"

"Your lordship well knoweth the price set upon my head, and—Here, I am under your protection. We are all as one man. His worship, the podestà, is a friend of the house. I am respected by the police, and I, on my part—little honor it does me, but for

the sake of quiet—treat them as friends. Your lordship's livery is known in Milan, but at Monza—I am known instead. And is your lordship aware that—without boasting—it would be a good day's work for any one that could hand me over to justice or cash my head at its assessed value? One hundred *scudi* in the coin of the realm and power to free two bandits from prison."

"An apoplexy seize thee!" said Don Rodrigo. "Art thou turning out to be nothing more than a barking cur, with barely heart enough to snap at the heels of passers-by while its master is looking on, too craven to leave its own doorstep?"

"I believe, your lordship, that I have given proof——"

"Therefore."

"Therefore," Griso pursued with unruffled brow when thus put upon his mettle, "let it be as if I had not spoken. Brave as a lion, nimble as a hare, and ho for the broad highway!"

"And have I told thee to go alone? Take two of the best along with thee, Sfregiato and Tira-dritto, and have never a fear, but be thy own self. What, a pox! A trio like you three and bent, besides, on your own business, and who should not be well content to let you go your way? The police of Monza must set small store by their lives to throw them in the balance against a hundred *scudi* in so desperate a game. And besides, I do not think my name is so unknown in those parts that to be servant of mine will go for naught."

Having thus worked somewhat upon Griso's sense of shame, he proceeded to give him fuller and more particular instructions. Griso, taking his two companions, set out with a cheerful, devil-may-care look upon his face, but inwardly cursing at Monza, head-monies, women and the caprices of masters, and pushed along, like the gaunt, pinch-bellied wolf that is driven by hunger from its snow-clad mountains into the valley. It steals along suspiciously, stopping occasionally, with paw suspended and denuded tail weaving in and out, to

"Raise its nose and sniff the faithless air"

for any lurking smell of man or trap, its sharp ears pricked and its bloodshot eyes rolling about and betraying at once its

lust of killing and its terror of the huntsman. This beautiful verse, should any one care to know whence it is taken, was culled from a still unpublished volume having to do with Lombards and Crusades, which is not going to remain unpublished much longer, and a great stir it will make, too. I have used it, because it came pat to my purpose. I have made proper acknowledgments, so as not to deck myself out in borrowed plumes. And with this, I hope every one will acquit me of slyly insinuating that the author and I are like two brothers and that I can rummage at will through his manuscripts.[1]

The other concern of Don Rodrigo was to find a way of preventing Renzo from returning home with Lucia; and to this end he planned to disseminate rumors of threats and plots against his life, which, coming to his ear through some friend or other, would quickly drive away all thought of wandering back. He reflected, however, that, if it were possible to bring it about, expatriation would be the surest course of all; and to compass this, the law, he perceived, would be a better ally than violence. It would be possible, for instance, to give the color of aggression or seditious conduct to the adventure in the rectory, and by means of Doctor Azzecca-Garbugli intimate to the podestà that the circumstances of the case called for the issuance of a warrant against Renzo. But he deemed such base negotiations to be beneath him, and without cudgelling his brains any further in the matter, he decided to open his mind to the man of the law just far enough to make plain what he desired. "There is no end of edicts," he soliloquized; "and the doctor is not a goose. He'll unearth something that bears on my case, some quibble in which to enmesh

[1] [To understand the playful spirit in which this acknowledgment is made, the reader should note that the author of the poem, Tommaso Grossi, belonged to the innermost circle of Manzoni's intimate friends, and even formed one of the novelist's own family, occupying two rooms of the house in Via Morone until the younger poet's marriage. At the time these words were written Grossi was occupied in composing his "I Lombardi alla Prima Crociata," and his friends were engaged in a benevolent conspiracy to stimulate his activity. Eventually the poem appeared more than a year before "I Promessi Sposi."—TRANSLATOR.]

that bumpkin. Else he forfeits his name."[2] But (so baffling are the freaks of fortune!) while he was thus thinking of the lawyer as his ablest confederate, another, and he the least likely of all men—Renzo himself, to have done with mysteries—was working with might and main to serve him more promptly and unerringly than the lawyer could have done with all his expedients.

I have more than once watched a boy—a dear little fellow, and one who, with all his exuberance of animal spirits, exhibited signs that some day he would give a good account of himself—strenuously employed towards nightfall in folding his herd of guinea-pigs, after leaving them to roam all day about the yard. He wanted to drive them all together into the sty; but it was labor lost. One of them would scamper away to the right, and, while the little herdsman ran after it to bring it back again into the pack, two or three others would scurry off to the left, and there would be a general stampede. At length, after getting somewhat out of patience, he would accommodate himself to their mood and drive in first those which were next to the entrance, after which he would go and get the others one by one, by twos or by threes, as the case might be. We must pursue a similar course with the characters of our story. Lucia being safely bestowed, we hurried back to Don Rodrigo. Now we must leave him to follow up Renzo, whom we have lost from view.

After the painful separation that we have described, Renzo fared forth from Monza towards Milan in a frame of mind which may be easily imagined. Exiled from home, and, worst of all, from Lucia, bereft of employment, a wanderer without a place to lay his head, and all on account of a scoundrelly noble—it was surely no cheerful set of reflections. When he allowed his mind to dwell on any one of them, he would become overwhelmed with rage and a craving for revenge. But then the prayer he had recited with the good friar in the church of Pescarenico would recur to him, and his self-control would return. His anger would flame up anew; but, seeing some sacred image on a wall,

[2] [The nickname Azzecca-Garbugli means, approximately, "Hatch-Quibble."—TRANSLATOR.]

he would doff his cap and pause to pray. So that in the course of that journey he slew Don Rodrigo a score of times in his heart and a score of times raised him to life again.

In those days the road lay between two high embankments. Besides being muddy and stony it was deeply furrowed with ruts, which, after a rain, became veritable gutters, and in the deeper depressions the whole highway became submerged, so that one might have rowed through in a boat. At such points a steep and narrow path, or ramp, up the side of the embankment showed where others had made their way across the fields. Renzo, having climbed up one of these elevations, saw the great pile of the cathedral towering in isolated majesty over the plain, as if it arose not in a city but right in the midst of a desert. He stood transfixed, all his woes forgotten, gazing, even afar off, at this eighth wonder of the world of which he had heard so much from his infancy. But, upon turning around after some few moments of contemplation and seeing the serrated crest of his native mountains against the horizon with his own Resegone standing out clear and high from its companions, he felt his heart beat rapidly and stood for some moments longer looking sorrowfully in that direction. Then with heavy heart he turned away and continued on his path. Little by little he perceived belfries and towers, then cupolas and roofs, off in the distance. Descending into the highroad, he walked some distance farther, and, when he observed that he was close to the city, he approached a wayfarer, and, bowing with the grace he knew how to assume, "Under your favor, good sir," he said.

"What is your pleasure, worthy youth?"

"Could you tell me the shortest way to the Capuchin convent, where Father Bonaventura resides?"

The man to whom Renzo addressed himself was a well-to-do inhabitant of the suburbs, who, having gone to Milan that morning on certain business, was returning in great haste with the business untouched. He could hardly wait until he reached home and would willingly have dispensed with this delay. For all that, he betrayed no sign of impatience and replied very courteously: "My son, there are more convents than one. You

would have to inform me more clearly which you seek." Renzo took Father Cristoforo's letter from his bosom and showed it to the gentleman, who, seeing the address to be the East Gate, returned it, saying: "You are fortunate, worthy youth; the monastery you seek is not far distant. Turn up this lane to the left (it is a short-cut), and in a few minutes you will come to the corner of a long low building. It is the *lazaretto*. Follow the moat which surrounds it, and you will reach the East Gate. Upon entering and walking three or four hundred paces, you will see a small square planted with goodly elms. The monastery is there; you cannot mistake it. God keep you, worthy youth." Accompanying the last words with a gracious wave of the hand, he continued on.

Renzo was no less amazed than edified at the civility shown by burghers to the peasantry, not knowing that it was an exceptional day—a day when broadcloth was bowing to fustian. He followed the road which had been pointed out and found himself before the East Gate. This name must not, however, conjure up before the reader's imagination the picture which is associated with it now. When Renzo entered the city, the road outside the walls continued to be straight only the length of the *lazaretto* and then became a narrow, crooked lane rambling on between a hedge on either side. The gate itself consisted of two pilasters spanned by a penthouse to protect the woodwork and flanked on one side by a cabin for the tax-collectors. The bastions sloped down unsymmetrically to meet a ragged expanse of potsherds and rubbish dumped promiscuously about their base. The street that opened before one on entering might not inappropriately be likened to what one now beholds on coming through the Tosa Gate. A ditch ran down the middle for some distance, thus dividing it into two passages, equally tortuous, and covered with dust or mud according to the season. At the Borghetto (as that alley was then known, and is still) the ditch ceased and emptied into a sewer. A column surmounted by a cross, and known as the column of St. Dennis, stood on the spot. Gardens, bordered by hedges, ran along to the right and left, with here and there a cottage, generally tenanted by a washerwoman.

Renzo entered and passed on his way without any challenge from the tax-gatherers—a circumstance which struck him as strange, because the few fellow-countrymen of his who could boast of having been to Milan had told monstrous tales of the searchings and cross-questionings to which peasants were subjected. The street was deserted, so that, had he not heard the distant rumble as of a great concourse, he might have been entering a town without inhabitants.

Pushing on without knowing what to think, he observed that the ground was streaked with a white, flaky substance like snow —only snow it could not be, since it does not snow in streaks or, as a usual thing, at such a season. He stooped down to look more closely. He touched it. It was flour. "Milan must enjoy great plenty," he mused, "when they squander God's gift after this manner. They would make us believe that the scarcity is everywhere. See how they trick poor peasants into being patient." But, on proceeding a few paces farther, he saw something still stranger at the foot of the column. There, on the steps of the pediment, were strewn objects which certainly were not stones and which, had he seen them on the counter of a bakery, he would not have hesitated an instant to call loaves of bread. But Renzo durst not so readily believe his eyes, because he was blessed if that was any place to expect bread. "Let us look into this," he again mused; and, going up to the column, he stooped and picked one up. It was, in very sooth, a round, white loaf, such as Renzo was accustomed to eat only on great feast-days. "Bread to a certainty!" he exclaimed aloud, such was his amazement. "And is this the way they scatter it about here? And in this year, too? And not take the pains to pick it up when it falls? This must be the very land of Cocagne." After ten miles in the shrewd morning air, the loaf whetted not only his wonder but his appetite as well. "Shall I take it?" he deliberated. "Bah! They have left it at the mercy of the very dogs, and why should not a Christian enjoy it? After all, if the owner appears, I'll pay him for it." Thus thinking, he thrust the loaf he was holding into one pocket and a second into another. Then he picked up a third and started eating it as he resumed

his way, more mystified than ever and curious to know what it all signified.

He had hardly taken a step when he saw folks coming from the interior of the town. He looked intently at the first to arrive several paces behind them, an urchin—all three bearing burdens on the scene. The party consisted of a man and woman, and, that seemed beyond their strength and all strangely misshapen. Their garments—or the remnants of them—were white with flour. Their inflamed, wild-looking features were similarly powdered, and they walked along not only bowed under the weight of their loads but painfully, as if their bones were bruised. The man staggered under a great sack of flour, the contents of which escaped through a number of rents with every false step or lurch of his body. But still more outlandish was the figure made by the woman, with a prodigious pot-belly which she seemed barely able to support by means of two arms curving inwards like the handles of an amphora and from under which protruded a pair of legs, bare to the knees, that waddled uncertainly forward. On looking more closely, Renzo perceived that this huge protuberance was the woman's skirt, held by the hem with as much flour as it would contain—even a little more, so that at each step the wind carried away its toll of the surplusage. The boy was holding on with both hands to a basket of bread which he carried on his head; but, his legs being shorter than those of his parents, he gradually fell behind, and, mending his pace from time to time to overtake them, the basket would become unbalanced and some of the loaves would fall out.

"Throw away yet another, good-for-nothing," said the woman, gnashing her teeth at the boy.

"Nay, I do not throw them away. They fall of themselves. What am I to do?" replied he.

"Ugh! Well for you that my hands are full," rejoined the woman, shaking her fist as if she were in the act of mauling him, and thus spilling more flour than would have sufficed to make two such loaves as the boy had dropped.

"Pshaw!" said the man, "let us return and pick them up, or

some one else will. We have fasted over long. Now that a day of plenty has come, let us enjoy it in blessed peace."

Meanwhile other folk came from the direction of the gate. One of them accosted the woman and asked where the bread was to be found.

"Farther on," she replied, muttering as they advanced a few paces away: "These villainous peasants will come now and make a clean sweep of the bake-shops and depots and leave nothing for us."

"Somewhat for all, shrew of a woman," said the husband. "There is great plenty, great plenty."

From these and other indications Renzo began to infer that he had come upon a city in mutiny and that this was the day of conquest—that is to say, that each one took according to his desires or his strength, giving blows in payment. Much as we wish to show off our humble mountaineer to advantage, historical honesty obliges us to state that his first emotion was one of pleasure. He had seen so little to commend in the ordinary course of things, that he found himself inclined to approve of any change that might come. Besides, not being superior to the age in which he lived, he shared in the common opinion, or superstition, that the scarcity of bread was caused by monopolists and bakers; and so he was disposed to find justification for any mode of extorting from them the aliment which, according to that view of things, they so cruelly withheld from the need of a famishing people. Still he purposed to steer clear of the tumult and congratulated himself on having been directed to a Capuchin, who would find him a shelter and be to him as a father. With such thoughts in his mind he covered the short distance which still separated him from the monastery, watching, in the meantime, the new conquerors who were coming home laden with booty.

On the site of the present beautiful palace with its lofty portico there was then, and there continued to be until recently, a small square fronting the Capuchin church and monastery behind a screen of four great elm-trees. We grudgingly extend our congratulations to those of our readers who never saw this old state

of things, for that means that they are still very young and have not had much time for folly. Renzo went straight up to the door, and, hiding in his bosom the uneaten half of his loaf and at the same time drawing forth the letter, which he kept ready in his hand, he rang the bell. A window opened, and behind the grating appeared the face of the porter, who asked for his name.

"Some one from the country, bearing an urgent message from Father Cristoforo to Father Bonaventura."

"Give it to me," said the porter, reaching a hand towards the grating.

"Nay, nay!" said Renzo. "I must hand it to himself."

"He is not in the monastery."

"Let me come in, and I'll wait."

"Be said by me," replied the friar. "Go wait in the church, and meanwhile you can be doing good to your soul. The monastery is closed for the present." So saying, he closed the window, and Renzo remained holding his letter. He took a few steps in the direction of the church, pursuant to the advice of the porter, but then decided to take another glance at the disturbance. Crossing the church-square, he came out again upon the street and stood with arms folded upon his breast, looking off to his left at the interior of the city, where the uproar was highest. He felt the vortex drawing him. "Let us have a look," he said to himself; and, pulling forth his unfinished loaf, he started off, munching as he went. While he is on his way, we shall relate as briefly as may be the causes and beginnings of the turmoil.

Chapter XII

It was the second year of short crops. During the first the surplus of preceding years had supplied the deficit indifferently well, and the harvest of 1628—the period with which our story now deals—found the people neither famished nor pampered, but certainly altogether unprovided for the future. This much desired harvest proved more wretched than its predecessor, partly owing to contrary weather (and this not only on Milanese soil, but throughout a good part of the adjacent territory), partly owing to the baneful agency of man. The destructiveness and extravagance of warfare (that glorious war of which mention has already been made) were such that many farms in the neighborhood of the fighting were more than ever abandoned or left untilled by the peasantry; who, instead of laboring to supply bread for themselves and for others, were thus reduced to begging it from the charity of strangers. I have said "more than ever," because the habitual conduct, even in time of peace, of the troops quartered in the villages (likened by the melancholy chronicles of the time to the conduct of an invading foe), the intolerable exactions they imposed with a cupidity that could be paralleled only by their senselessness, and other causes which this is not the place to enumerate, had for a long time been operating slowly to bring about this sad condition of affairs in the whole Milanese province; and the particular circumstances of which we now speak were only the acute aggravation of a chronic evil. Poor as it was, the present harvest was not yet fully garnered when the levies for the soldiery and the damage that is their inevitable accompaniment made such inroads upon its dimensions that want immediately began to make itself felt, and, together with want, its distressing, but salutary as it is inevitable, result—the advance of prices.

At a certain stage in this latter process the belief invariably arises (at least it always has arisen up to the present; and if it

arises now, after all that had been written on the subject by eminent men, what of the times which we are describing!) that the increase in prices is not caused by the scarcity of supplies. People forget that it was feared and foretold. They assume all at once that there is great abundance, and that the evil comes from not selling enough to meet the demands—assumptions which have no existence in fact, but which serve for a time to beguile their anger and their hope.

Monopolists, real or imaginary, and landed proprietors who did not sell their whole store in a single day, bakers who bought up grain—all, in fine, who owned any, be it little or much, or who were reputed to own any, were held responsible for the prevalence of want and high prices and became a target for universal complaint and the abomination of the multitude, from pauper to prodigal. It was stated with the greatest confidence where one might find depots and granaries, pressed down and running over and buttressed up. The number of sacks was specified in incredible figures. Gossip held forth oracularly on the immense quantities of grain which had been secretly sent to other parts, where, very likely, they were inveighing with equal assurance and indignation against their grain being sent to Milan. The magistrates were importuned to enact such measures as to the multitude always appear—or, perhaps I should say, always have appeared up to the present—so fair, so simple, so well calculated to make hidden grain come dancing forth from pit or vault and restore abundance.

Part of these demands was granted. The maximum price of certain foodstuffs was determined, penalties were provided for refusing to sell, and other ordinances of like nature were promulgated. But, inasmuch as all the enactments in the world, be they never so vigorous, are powerless to lessen the necessity of food or produce crops out of season, and inasmuch as these enactments in particular proved powerless to dislodge whatever superabundance may have existed, the evil continued and waxed worse. The multitude attributed this result to the scantiness and feebleness of the remedies and clamored loudly for something

more heroic and radical. Unfortunately they found a man according to their own heart.

In the absence of the governor, Don Gonzalo Fernandez de Cordova, who was directing the siege of Casale in Montferrat, his functions at Milan were performed by the high-chancellor, Antonio Ferrer, also a Spaniard. The latter saw (as who could not have seen?) that a fair price for bread is in itself a thing greatly to be desired; and he thought (and this is where he made his mistake) that an order from him would be sufficient to bring it about. He fixed the *meta* (as the legal rate was then designated in the parlance of our produce markets)—he fixed the *meta* of bread at a figure which would have been just if wheat sold for thirty-three *lire* the bushel. As it was, it sold as high as eighty *lire*. He acted not unlike a woman who would think to regain her lost youth by falsifying her baptismal certificate.

Less insensate and iniquitous decrees than this have more times than one become dead letters through the difficulties inherent in their very operation; but the people, seeing their wishes translated into law and unwilling that it should be only a mockery, looked after its execution themselves. Off they ran to the bake-shops to call for bread at the established price; and they called for it with that mingled air of determination and threatening which passion, brute force and legal support combine to produce. That the bakers objected goes without saying. To be mixing and kneading and bent double over their ovens without a moment's respite (for the people, realizing in a vague sort of way the violence of the innovation, kept up a constant siege of the bake-shops, to enjoy the windfall as long as it lasted)—to be toiling and moiling, I say, beyond their wont, only to pile up a deficit in the end, was a sport whose agreeableness every one can imagine. But, with the magistrates on one side pronouncing penalties and, on the other, the people wishing to be served and, did a baker but demur a single second, insisting on their rights with those sullen mutterings which constitute their august voice and threatening to give an exhibition of their justice (the most abominable variety of it which this world affords), there was no help for it but to keep on kneading, baking and selling.

Still, if the scheme was to continue, commands and intimidation were not enough; the scheme must be, in the last analysis, possible; and possible it could not long remain, had things gone much further. The bakers represented to the magistrates the iniquity and unbearableness of the burden imposed on them. They protested their readiness to throw their peels into the fire and leave. Meanwhile they went ahead as best they might, hoping against hope that some day or other the high-chancellor would listen to reason. But Antonio Ferrer, who was what we would today call a man of character, replied that they had reaped, and reaped richly, in the past, and that they would reap richly again with the return of plenty; that he would see—he would consider—whether they might not perhaps receive some indemnification; and that, in the interval, they should go on with their work. Whether he was really convinced of the arguments which he alleged, or whether, recognizing from its results the impracticability of his edict, he wished to throw the odium of repealing it on others (for who can now enter into the mind of Antonio Ferrer?), the fact remains that he held by what he had decreed. At length the decurions (a municipal magistrature, composed of nobles, which persisted till ninety-six of the past century) informed the governor by letter of the pass at which matters had arrived and that it depended upon him to find a way out of the dilemma.

Don Gonzalo, immersed over his ears in the business of warfare, did what the reader might imagine—he appointed a commission with powers to fix the price of bread at a feasible sum, so that the people might live and let live. They held a meeting, or *junta*, according to the Spanish jargon of the time, and after much bowing and bandying of courtesies, after preambles without number, at the conclusion of infinite hemming and hawing, of feelers vaguely thrown out and then repudiated, the instant needs of a case which all recognized to be serious at last forced them to come to some decision; and, knowing well that they were playing a desperate hand, but at a loss what else to do, they decreed an advance in the price of bread. The bakers drew a breath of relief, but the populace was infuriated.

On the evening before the day of Renzo's arrival in Milan the streets and public squares of the city swarmed with men in the grip of one overpowering impulse of rage and one engrossing idea. Acquaintances or strangers, they fell into groups without prearrangement, almost without advertence, like drops of water on the same window-pane. Each remark strengthened the conviction and inflamed the passion of the listeners, and of the speaker as well. Scattered among so many excited spirits, there were not wanting others of a cooler and more calculating disposition, who looked on with complacency at this troubling of the water, nay, exercised their wits in troubling it still more by means of such arguments and narratives as knaves well know how to concoct and overwrought minds are apt to believe, purposing to catch some fish before it had time to settle. Thousands of men went to bed with a vague feeling that something ought to be done, and that something would be done. Before day broke knots of people had again gathered in the streets—children, women, men, old grandsires, workmen, beggars, thrown together higgledy-piggledy. Here, there was a confused murmur of voices; there, one man was holding forth while the rest applauded. This man is asking his neighbor the same question that had, a moment before, been put to him; another is repeating some exclamation which had been borne along to him by the wind. Astonishment, discontent and vindictiveness are heard everywhere. A few dozens of words furnished the total vocabulary of all this prodigious eloquence.

Nothing was now wanting to convert words into deeds but an occasion, some hand set to the machinery, a finger's weight of propulsion; and the want was soon filled. Towards the hour of daybreak apprentices began to issue from the bake-shops, bearing panniers of bread destined for the homes of customers. The appearance of the first of these luckless youths before a waiting group was like the falling of a lighted rocket in a powder-mazagine.

"See whether there be bread or no!" cried out a hundred voices at once.

"Yes, for the tyrants who revel in plenty and would have us

die of hunger," spoke up one, as he drew near the apprentice-lad. "Let us have a look," he said, putting his hand on the pannier and giving it a jerk.

The color came and went on the cheek of the trembling youth, and he would have begged to be let go on his way, but the words died on his lips. Relaxing his arms, he hurriedly sought to extricate himself from his harness.

"Down with that pannier!" meanwhile became the cry. Twenty hands at once grabbed the prize and bore it to the ground, snatching away the canvas covering as they did so and thus releasing the fragrant warmth of new-baked bread. "We be Christians and have as good a right to eat as others," proclaimed the former speaker, holding up one of the round loaves before the eyes of the mob and then biting into it. Bread flew thick and fast in the scramble that ensued, and in less time than it takes to tell it, the basket was emptied of its contents. Those who remained empty-handed, exasperated at the acquisitions made by their neighbors and spurred on by the facility of the enterprise, went off in squads to seek other panniers. To find was to plunder. No need even to assault the carriers; those whose ill luck it was to be abroad no sooner saw the lay of the land than they voluntarily divested themselves of their burdens and showed their heels to the despoilers. For all that, those whom the feast had passed by comprised by far the larger number, and even the victors themselves were dissatisfied with booty so meagre. Both classes were swelled by the occasional presence of still others who had set their hearts on an uprising of more respectable dimensions. So the cry was raised: "To the bake-shop! to the bake-shop!"

In the street known as the Corsia dei Servi there was, and continues still to be, a bake-shop which preserves its name unchanged to the present day—a name which, in the vernacular, signifies "The Crutches" and which, in the Milanese dialect, is made up of words so irregular, so capricious and uncouth that the alphabet has no way of indicating their sound.[1] Thither the mob now bent its way. The shopkeepers were in the act of

[1] El prestin di scanse.

interrogating the pilfered messenger, who still bore traces of the rough usage he had received. He was stammering out in terrified accents the story of his mischance, when the sound of tramping mingled with the roar of voices reached their ears. The noise grew louder and the footsteps came nearer and nearer, and at length the vanguard of the mob hove into view. The bakery was instantly in hugger-mugger. One of their number was despatched post-haste to the prefect of police for help; the others hurriedly closed the shop and barricaded the doors. Without, the crowd started to multiply, and cries of "Bread, bread! Open the doors!" filled the air.

The prefect of police arrived presently under an escort of halberdiers. "Make way, lads, make way!" shouted he and his followers. "Get you home, begone! Give place to the prefect of police." The crowd, which was not yet overly dense, fell back far enough to permit the officer of the law and his auxiliaries to reach the door of the bake-shop and take up their position together, if not in the order of their rank.

"Why, my friends," held forth the prefect from this coign of vantage, "what do you here? To your homes, to your homes! Where is your fear of God? What will be said by our lord, the king? We wish to do you no scathe; but return to your homes, like good citizens. What the de'il would you be doing here in such numbers? No good, I trow, either for soul or body. To your homes!"

No matter how willing those who could hear the speaker's words and see his face may have been to obey his behests, the reader is left to judge how little all their good-will must have availed against the accumulated thrust of the serried ranks of humanity behind them, piling up one against another like the breakers of the ocean and fed momentarily by fresh acquisitions from without. The prefect began to be suffocated. "Force them back, that I may breathe," he commanded his halberdiers; "but do no one any harm. Let us try to gain an entrance into the shop. Knock ye there. Make them stand back."

"Fall back! fall back!" shouted the halberdiers, throwing their united weight against the first rank and repelling them with the

butts of their pikes. With angry cries the assaulted pulled back as far as ever they could by dint of digging their elbows into the stomachs and trampling on the toes of the row behind them. Those in the middle of the resulting crush would have given a great deal to be in some other spot at that precise moment. Meanwhile a small space was cleared before the door, at which the prefect banged away, clamoring to be admitted. On seeing from the window who it was, those on the inside ran downstairs and undid the bolt, admitting the prefect, who summoned his halberdiers in after him. They edged their way through one after another, the last of them holding the mob in check by means of their pikes. Once within, they bolted and barricaded the door anew, and their leader flew up the steps and showed his face at the window. Ugh! What a swarm of people!

"Ho! my friends," he bawled out. At the sound many looked up. "Return to your homes. A general pardon to all who go home at once."

"Bread, bread! Open the doors!" were the words most clearly distinguishable in the horrid roar which the crowd sent back in reply.

"Keep your heads, my men. Look to it well, while there is still time. Come, return home. Bread you shall have, but this is no way to go about it. Ho there! What are you doing below at that door? Hallo! hallo! What! Before my eyes! Bethink yourselves; 'tis a grave crime ye attempt. A little more and I shall come down to you. Ho! ho there! Drop those bars; hands off! Shame on you! You men of Milan, who have been known for your peaceableness the world over. Hear, hear! You have always been good sub— Hah! you vermin!"

This rapid change of style was caused by a rock, which, with impulsion derived from the hand of one of these same good subjects, came into sudden contact with the forehead of the prefect of police, striking him upon the left protuberance of his metaphysical convexity. "Vermin and scum of the earth!" he continued to cry out, as he hastily closed the window and withdrew. But, though he had screamed himself hoarse, all his words, both fair and foul, had been utterly drowned in the storm of

yells that came from below. That which had attracted his animadversions midway in his harangue was the institution of activities with cobble-stones and iron rods—the first that came to hand—undertaken to batter down the door and wrench the bars from the windows. The work was already well under weigh.

In the meantime the owners of the shop and their apprentices, who stood at the windows of an upper story armed with rocks (they had probably torn up the paving of the courtyard for the purpose), shouted at those below and beckoned to them to desist, at the same time showing their munitions and intimating their readiness to use them. Seeing that it was time lost, they started in to throw them in real earnest. Not one of the missiles but found its mark, for the press was now so dense that a grain of millet, as we say, could not have worked its way through.

"Hah! scoundrels! villains! Is this the bread you give to poor people? Ah! Alack! Ouch! Now, now!" Such were the different cries from below. More than one were badly wounded, two youths mortally. Rage gave new strength to the populace. The door was broken down, the window-bars were torn off, and through every breach streamed a torrent of people. Those within, seeing the disastrous turn of events, fled to the garret. The prefect, the halberdiers, and some of the shop-folk remained there huddled in corners. The rest, escaping by trap-doors onto the roof, scrambled off like cats.

The sight of booty made the victors forget their designs of bloody retaliation. Pouncing upon the bread-bins, they put their contents to the sack. Others rushed instead to the till. Throwing away the lock, they seized the coin-cups and started to cram handfuls of coin into their pockets. They then sallied forth weighted down with coppers, only to return for some of the pilfered bread, if any remained. The mob scattered about the warehouse, seizing upon the sacks of flour stored therein, dragging them about and spilling their contents. Here was one of their number engaged in untying a sack, which he held wedged between his legs, and throwing away a part of the flour to bring it down to portable dimensions; while another stooped over with apron, kerchief or bonnet prepared to receive the heaven-sent

blessing. Another made a raid upon the kneading-trough and laid hold of some of the dough, which oozed out between his hands and fingers and hung about him like tentacles. Still another gained possession of a sieve, which he held aloft like a tambourine. Men, women and children jostled one another about, helter-skelter, in deafening confusion amidst clouds of white dust that settled down in a snow-like mantle on every object within the shop. Outside, two opposing currents, composed of those departing with their plunder and those entering in quest of it, met and broke before the door.

While this bake-shop was thus turned topsyturvy, not one of the others escaped some degree of jeopardy or turbulence; but nowhere else was the affluence so great as to undertake extreme measures. In some of them the proprietors had collected recruits and stood prepared for attack. Others, finding themselves outnumbered, came to terms with the besiegers, distributing bread to such as started to assemble before their shops, on condition that they would leave. They left, not so much because they were satisfied with their bargain, as because the halberdiers and police, while keeping at a safe distance from the awful Bakery of the Crutches, still showed themselves in sufficient force elsewhere to inspire respect in those scalawags whose numbers fell short of being a mob. Thus the hurly-burly at the first ill-starred bakery grew constantly in intensity, because all those whose fingers itched to accomplish some mischief naturally repaired where friends were strongest and impunity most certain.

Matters were at this stage when Renzo, who by this time had finished crunching his loaf, was wending his way down the avenue of the East Gate, bound directly, without being aware of it, for the very focus of the tumult. On he went, at times hurried along, at times impeded by the crowds, all eyes and ears to gain from the confused rumble of conversation some more definite intelligence in regard to the conditions around him. This is a fair specimen of what he succeeded in hearing during the whole course of his walk:

"Now," bawled one, "we can see through this infernal imposture about there being no bread, nor flour, nor grain. All is at

last as plain as a pikestaff, and we can be gulled no longer. Hurrah for King Plenty!"

"I tell you that all this skills nothing," said another. "It is only a flash in the pan. Nay, we shall be worse off than before, unless we give them a lesson in justice which they will remember. They'll sell us bread cheap enough, but they will poison the batter to kill off poor folk like flies. They say already that we are too numerous. These are the very words of the commission. I can vouch for it; for did I not hear it with my own ears from a gossip of mine, whose friend is related to the scullion of one of those gentry?"

We dare not transcribe the language used by a third speaker, who foamed at the mouth and bore a bloody kerchief around his dishevelled head. Some bystanders echoed his sentiments by way of offering him consolation.

"Make way, make way, my masters; of your graciousness, make way for a poor father of family, who is bringing his five children something to eat." This from a man who came along staggering beneath a great sack of flour. Every one endeavored to step back and let him pass.

"I?" said another in an undertone to his companion. "I am going to beat a retreat. I have some knowledge of the world and I know how these things are wont to go. These asses, who are now making such a brave to-do, will be hiding at home tomorrow or the day after in mortal fear. I have already seen certain truepennies going about playing the spy and taking note of who is present and who is not. When the fun is over, the reckoning will come, and those who have danced must pay the piper."

"He who upholds these bakers," roared a stentorian voice that attracted the attention of Renzo, "is the director of supplies."

"They are all rascals," quoth a neighbor.

"Yes; but he is the arch-rascal," retorted the first.

The director of supplies, appointed each year by the governor from among six nobles proposed by the council of decurions, was the president of this body, as well as of the tribunal of supplies. The latter was composed of twelve members (nobles as in the

other case) and, among other prerogatives, exercised that of victualling the city. The occupant of such a post was, in times of famine and ignorance, bound to be held as the author of the evils which infected the country—unless, indeed, he did as Ferrer had done, a thing which was not within his discretion, even though it had been in his thoughts.

"Scoundrels!" exclaimed another. "Could their iniquity aspire higher? They do not stick at saying that the high-chancellor is in his second childhood, to destroy his credit and retain all the power in their own hands. 'Twere need to mew them all up together in one great sty and feed them on cockle and vetches, as they would serve us."

"Bread, do ye say?" quoth one who was trying to escape in a hurry. "Nay, but stones—stones of a pound's weight showered down on us like hailstones. Ugh! what a breaking of ribs! I can hardly wait till I am snug in my own house."

Amid such discoursing, which contributed as much to his bewilderment as to his enlightenment, and amid the jostling of the throng which wedged him in, Renzo at length arrived in front of the bakery. The crowd was already much thinner, so that he could observe the ugly marks of the recent havoc. The walls were scarred and dented by rocks and bricks, the windows unhinged and the door torn from its moorings.

"This is a sorry sort of jest," thought Renzo to himself. "If they are going to smash all the bakeries like this, where do they reckon to make bread? In the wells?"

At intervals people issued from the shop, bearing one a fragment of a bread-bin, kneading-hutch or winnowing-fan, another a rolling-pin, another a stool, a pannier or a ledger, some relic or other in fine from the ill-fated bake-shop, and crying for the crowd to open up, passed through the press. They all bent their steps in a certain direction, and, as it was plain to see, towards a preconcerted spot. "What new lark may this be?" wondered Renzo, and started off in the wake of one, who, with a bundle made from the chips and splinters of a bread-board on his shoulder, was wending his way like the rest along the street which flanks the north side of the cathedral and which derived its name

from a flight of stairs which stood there at that time but which disappeared not long ago.

His curiosity to witness what was going on did not prevent our mountaineer from pausing, when he found himself facing the stately pile, and gazing up in open-mouthed wonder. He then quickened his pace to catch up with him whom he had taken for a guide, and, on turning the corner, bestowed another glance at the façade, which was then in the rough, being as yet far from completion—all the time dogging the steps of his leader, who made for the middle of the square. The press grew thicker the farther they advanced, but the crowd made room for the man with a burden. He cleft the surging tide, and Renzo, following him faithfully as a shadow, found himself, together with his conductor, right in the center of the mob. There an empty space was cleared, in the middle of which smouldered a pile of embers, the remains of the implements alluded to before. All around hands were clapping and feet were stamping, and a thousand throats set up discordant shouts of triumph and imprecation.

The man of the fagot cast it on the coals. Another, with the charred butt of a baker's peel, stirred the fire. The smoke thickened, the flames mounted up, and, together with them, the cries of the multitude rose louder and louder: "Long live King Plenty! Death to the starvers! Death to the famine! The devil take the tribunal and the commission! Bread forever!"

In good sooth the destruction of kneading-hutches and winnowing-fans, the demolishing of bake-shops and the routing of bakers, are not the most self-evident means to promote abundance of bread; but this is one of those metaphysical subtleties which evade the penetration of the populace. Still, without being a great metaphysician, a man will sometimes perceive the truth of it, so long as he is a novice. It is by discussing it and hearing it discussed that he grows incapable of seeing it. It occurred to Renzo, for instance, at the very outset, and recurred at every instant, as we have seen. He kept his wisdom muzzled, however; for not one of all the faces about him bore an expression which might be construed to say: Correct me, brother, if I err, and I shall be beholden to you.

The fire had again died away, and no one was seen coming with more fuel. The crowd was beginning to grow restless, when a rumor was spread that a bake-shop was being besieged at the Cordusio, a square not far distant, from which streets radiated in several directions. It often happens in such cases that a rumor brings about the thing rumored. The wish to go and see became as contagious as the report. "I am going. What of you?" "I go, too." "Come; let us be off"—such was the universal trend of expression. The mass stirred and began forming itself into a procession. Renzo lagged behind, hardly moving except when he was carried along by the current and deliberating with himself whether to miss the fray and return to the monastery in search of Father Bonaventura or go and see the new chapter of incidents. His curiosity won the day. He resolved, however, not to thrust himself into the thick of the press and risk breaking his bones or incurring worse misfortunes still, but to keep aloof and watch developments at a proper distance. Finding that he already had a little elbow-room, he drew his second loaf from his pocket, and, biting off a mouthful, he set out in the rear of the disorderly army.

The vanguard had already turned out of the square into the short and narrow Street of the Old Fishmarket, and thence through a lopsided arch into the Square of the Shopkeepers. Few of this number failed, upon passing before the niche which bisects the portico of a building then known as the College of Leeches, to cast a glance at the great statue of Philip II which frowned down solemnly and surlily and which, even through the inanimate marble, imposed a kind of awe upon the rioters and seemed with its outstretched arm to be there for the purpose of saying: "I come anon, ye vile rabble."

By a singular mischance this statue no longer exists. About one hundred and seventy-five years after the events we are narrating the head was one day changed, for the sceptre in the hand was substituted a dagger, and it received the name of Marcus Brutus. Thus rehabilitated, it stood perhaps two years more, when one morning certain gentlemen who had no sympathy with Marcus Brutus, nay, who must have borne secret grudge

against him, cast a rope around its neck and pulled it down. When they had inflicted all manner of outrages upon it, they dragged the mutilated torso through the streets until their eyes bulged from their sockets and their tongues were lolling out of their mouths, and, when at length their strength was spent, they rolled it none knows where. Had such a thing been told Andrea Biffi, when he was carving it!

From the Square of the Shopkeepers the rabble poured out through a second archway into the Street dei Fustagnai and thence scattered into the Cordusio. On turning the corner every one looked at once towards the designated bake-house. Instead of the multitude of friends which they expected to find already at work, they saw only a handful of persons loitering at a safe distance from the shop as if in doubt, the shop closed and at the windows armed men standing in the attitude of defence.

Some stood gaping, some swore, some laughed at the sight which presented itself to them. Some turned to convey the news to those who were coming pell-mell upon the scene; others stood still, or wished to go back, or urged their fellows to give battle.

The crowd swayed back and forth under the impulse of the two opposing currents. There was a lull, as the spirit of vacillation took possession of them. The silence was now broken only by the confused murmur of consultation or disagreement. Suddenly an ill-omened voice burst forth from the middle of the throng: "The director of provisions lives hard by. Let us execute judgment on him and sack his house!" The response seemed more like the sudden remembrance of a forgotten program than the adoption of a new proposal. "To the director's! to the director's!" was the only cry which could be heard. The crowd moved onwards as one man towards the house which had been mentioned at such an evil juncture.

Chapter XIII

The unhappy director was at that moment morosely trying to reconcile his indignant digestive apparatus to the insipid meal of stale bread he had just forced down, and wondering with grave misgivings how the tumult was going to end—so far was he from suspecting that its frightful fury was about to be let loose against himself. Some honest fellow of the crowd ran on ahead to inform their victim of what was impending. The servants, drawn to the door by the noise, were looking in alarm down the street in the direction from which the sounds were approaching. The vanguard appeared as they were yet listening to the words of the courier. They stumbled over one another in their haste to carry the word to the master, and, while he stood thinking of flight and how to accomplish it, another arrived telling him that it was too late. Barely time enough was left to shut the door. They bolted it, braced it and then ran to close the windows, as we are wont to do when the sky turns black and we look for hail from one second to the next. The roaring swelled like the thunder's diapason until the empty courtyard rang and every nook and corner of the house shook with the vibration, while a steady tattoo of rocks against the door stood out in sharp staccato against the heavy undertone of rumbling.

"The director! The tyrant! The starver! We will have him, dead or alive."

The poor wretch, pale and breathless with fright, was running about from room to room, wringing his hands and recommending himself to God. He conjured his household to stand firm and contrive his escape. But how was he to escape, and whither? Climbing to the garret, he looked anxiously out through a chink. The street was wedged full of people, all raving and clamoring for his death. More beside himself than ever, he left his post and went in search of the safest and remotest nook he could find. Crouching into a corner, he waited and waited for the

dreadful noise to subside and the tumult to abate; but instead, he heard the bellowing grow fiercer and louder and the pelting at the door redouble its intensity, and, in a new access of panic, he stopped his ears with his fingers. Then, indeed, his frenzy burst all bounds. Clenching his teeth and straining every muscle of his face, he extended his arms and braced himself as if he were keeping the door from bursting in, and— But what else he may have done history does not say, because he was alone, and historians are obliged to guess. Fortunately they do not lack practice.

Renzo again found himself in the thickest of the turmoil, not carried along this time by the tide, but of set purpose. He had felt his blood boil at that first proposal to take human life. Whether the pillaging were well or ill he could not say, but the idea of manslaughter aroused in him a sincere and instinctive horror. And although, with that readiness to believe implicitly in impassioned affirmations which excitement produces in the mind, he was persuaded beyond a doubt that the director was the principal cause of the famine and an enemy of the poor, still, having chanced to hear, while the mob was getting under weigh, some words denoting an intention of striking a strong blow on behalf of the condemned, he had made up his mind forthwith to take a hand in the undertaking himself. With this in view he had forged his way to within a few feet of the door, which was the objective of a most varied assault. Some were trying to break the fastenings of the lock by pounding with cobble-stones upon the nails. Others went to work more systematically with crow-bars, chisels and hammers. Still others scratched the plaster from the walls with stones, with knives, with nails, staves, even with their finger-nails if other means were lacking, and directed their ingenuity towards making a breach in the brick-work. Those who could give no assistance shouted their encouragement to the workers, but at the same time, by their crowding and shoving, they hampered still more an undertaking already sufficiently beset with difficulties. Thus (Heaven be praised!) it happens in other causes than those which are good, that the most ardent enthusiasts often become a hindrance.

The first among the magistrates to receive notification of the occurrence at once sent in an appeal for help to the commandant of what was then known as the Castle of Porta Giovia. He sent a detachment of soldiers; but, what with delivering the message and issuing orders and making the muster and getting started and marching to the scene of the disturbance, the house was besieged by a sea of people by the time the soldiery arrived. They halted far off on the outskirts of the throng, and the officer in command was sorely puzzled what steps to take. All that met his eye was a sorry hotch-potch (if I may be pardoned such irreverence) of gaping men, women and children. They met his injunction to disband by deep and prolonged mutterings, but no one moved. To fire upon such a paltry rabble appeared to the officer as not only cruel but fraught with grave danger, because, while inflicting punishment upon the least offensive, he would at the same time exasperate the violence of the majority. Besides, he had no instructions to fire. To open up a path through the throng by buffeting them right and left and giving battle to the belligerents themselves would have been preferable; but to come off successfully—there was the rub. There was no telling whether the soldiers would be able to hold together and keep their formation, or whether, instead of cleaving a way through, they would become disunited and left to the mercy of the mob after having invited its animosity. The indecision of the captain and the passivity of the soldiers were attributed, rightly or wrongly, to fear. That part of the rabble in closest proximity to the troops contented itself with assuming a look of devil-may-care unconcern. Those who stood farther off did not hesitate to provoke them with mows and taunts. Still beyond, few knew or cared anything about them. The wreckers pursued their work of demolition with no thought beyond succeeding promptly in their undertaking, and the bystanders continued to spur them on with their yells.

Conspicuous among the latter was a depraved-looking old man, who, with eyes starting wildly from their cavernous sockets and his face contracted into a grin of fiendish delight, was dishonoring his grey hairs by waving above them nails, rope and hammer

with which he boasted that he was going to gibbet the director's carcass to his own door-posts.

"Faugh! For shame!" blurted out Renzo, horrified at these words and at the signs of approbation he read on many faces about him, as well as emboldened by the sympathetic look with which still others betrayed the same horror that possessed his own breast. "For shame! Shall we cheat the hangman and do a Christian to death? How can we ask God for bread, if we commit such atrocities? It's thunderbolts He will send us, not bread."

"Hah! dog of a traitor!" screamed one of those who stood near enough to Renzo to hear his God-fearing words through the din, as he turned on him with the face of a demoniac. "Hold, hold! He is a servant of the director's disguised as a peasant. He is a spy. At him! at him!"

"What? Where is he? Who is he?" ask a hundred voices in chorus. "A servant of the director's. A spy. The director escaping in the disguise of a peasant. Where is he? where is he? Stop him, stop him!"

Renzo shrank within himself, dumb and disposed to have the earth open up and swallow him. Some bystanders enveloped him, at the same time seeking to divert these cries of blood and malevolence with others equally loud but of different import. But what stood him in best stead was a summons raised not far off, "Make way! make way! Help has come. Make way, there. Holla!"

The occasion of these adjurations was a long ladder which was being brought to reach the window. But by good fortune the means which was to simplify matters proved to be cumbersome itself. The crowd surged about its bearers, who reeled and staggered from the force of the impact. One of their number, with his head pilloried between two rungs, bellowed like a bull under the rude yoke. Another, succumbing to a shove, abandoned his burden, which went threshing about, evoking the profanity of those whose ribs and shoulders were bruised by its aberrations. His neighbors took up the inert mass and bore it aloft, crying out: "Cheerily, men! On with the work!" and

the fatal engine went twisting and seesawing along its way, until it arrived in time to distract and confound the enemies of Renzo, who profited by the diversion to make his escape. Almost creeping at first, then elbowing people right and left like mad, he moved away from the neighborhood which was becoming so unwholesome, resolved to get out of the riot at the first opportunity and go to seek Father Bonaventura in good earnest.

All at once an extraordinary agitation, which had arisen on the skirts of the crowd, became transmitted through the whole press, as the rumor, flying from mouth to mouth, gained circulation, that Ferrer was coming. The sound of this name was the signal for mingled demonstrations of joy and anger, of favor and disapprobation, but of universal surprise, as it was passed along; some raising an acclamation which others tried to drown, some denying what others maintained, this one breaking forth in benedictions, while another satisfied his mood better by cursing.

"Ferrer is here!"—"Nay, nay; 'tis not true."—"Yes, yes. Hurrah for Ferrer, who gave us cheap bread!"—"Nay, nay."—"Yes, yes; he's in his carriage yonder."—"What's that to us? We'll none of him. Let him keep his nose out of it."—"Hurrah for Ferrer! hurrah for Ferrer, the friend of the poor! He cometh to take the director to prison." "No, no; we'll take the law into our own hands. Stand back."—"Yes, yes; Ferrer; let him come. To prison with the director!"

At this all stood on tiptoe to look in the direction from which the news of this unexpected arrival originated. Rising thus all together, they saw neither more nor less than if they had remained on their heels; but the fact remains, they rose.

In reality, on the extremity of the throng opposite to where the soldiery was stationed, Antonio Ferrer, the high-chancellor, had arrived in his coach. Very likely his conscience smote him with remorse for having by his extravagance and obstinacy been the cause, or at any rate, the occasion, of the uprising, and he was now coming in the hope of laying it or, at least, of averting its most terrible and irreparable effects, and thus of putting an ill-gotten popularity to good use.

In all popular tumults there are always a certain number of men who, whether it be from the heat of passion or fanatical conviction or evil designs, or again, from a craving for destruction, exert their utmost efforts to drive matters from bad to worse. They propose or champion the most impious suggestions, they fan the flame whenever it begins to fall. They are never surfeited with rioting, they would have it burst all bounds and exceed all measure. But, by way of compensation, there are always a number of others who, with equal zeal and equal persistence, labor to bring about the opposite result; some of them moved by friendship or partiality for the persons threatened, and others with no other motive beyond a holy and instinctive horror for bloodshed and atrocity. May the blessing of Heaven light on them! In each of the two opposing parties unanimity of wills creates uniformity of method, even when there has been no collusion. What gives bulk to the tumult and constitutes its material, as it were, is a fortuitous congeries of men who approach by more or less imperceptible gradations either the one extreme or the other; verging towards hot-headedness or knavery; inclining to justice, as they themselves understand the word; mildly eager to see some enormity perpetrated; readily moved to ferocity or to mercy, to abominate or worship, according as the opportunity offers to become inebriated with the one emotion or with the other; craving to know and believe some astounding news each moment; itching to lift up their voices either to applaud or to jeer. "Hurrah!" and "Death!" are the words most frequently in their mouths, and can one prevail on them that a given person does not deserve to be hanged, drawn and quartered, a very few words will suffice to convince them that he is worthy of being carried in triumph—actors or spectators, instruments or impediments, according to the way the wind sits —ready, likewise, to hold their peace when there are no more cries to take up, to desist when instigators are lacking, to disband when none are willing to tarry, and to return home asking what it was all about.

Since this unthinking mass can give preponderance to whomsoever it chooses, each side tries by every art to win it over and

control its movements—like two hostile souls seeking to enter into the same body and direct its energies. The day is won by whosoever is most skilful at spreading the rumors, stirring the passions and engineering the movements most favorable to the one cause or to the other; by whosoever can cater to transitory moods with statements which awaken hatred or lull it to sleep and arouse hopes or fears, or can coin shibboleths which will be taken up most loudly by the crowd and which determine, at the same time that they proclaim, the majority's preference for one side or for the other.

All which vaporing is merely preliminary to saying that, in the struggle of the two sides which contended for the suffrages of the throng in front of the house of the director, the appearance of Antonio Ferrer gave an immense advantage to the humane party, which a moment before had been plainly in the minority and in a few moments more would have been deprived of all power as well as all inducement to interfere. The old man was a favorite with the populace on account of his concessions to the consumer and his heroic stand against all remonstrances, and this antecedent partiality for him was heightened by his spirited contempt for danger in coming without any protection or retinue to meet an inflamed and turbulent mob. Then, again, the rumor that he was going to take the director to prison produced a wonderfully favorable impression; with the result that their rage, which would have been aggravated by a gruff, uncompromising manner, was by this promise of retribution—this sop to Cerberus —somewhat appeased, and room was made for the contrary sentiments, which were already welling up in many breasts.

The champions of peace, taking heart of grace, now seconded Ferrer in a hundred different ways—those who were near by, acting as protagonists in the general applause, and, at the same time, trying to open up a lane for the carriage to pass; the others by clapping their hands, by repeating and circulating his words, or such words as appeared best suited to the occasion, by berating the infuriated recalcitrants and turning against them the transformed feelings of the fickle assemblage.

"Who dares refuse to hurrah for Ferrer? You would not have

bread to sell too cheap, eh? Good Christian justice doth not suit the taste of some blackguards, and there be some who will be wrangling only to cover up the escape of the director by their boisterousness. To prison with the director! Hurrah for Ferrer! Make room for Ferrer!" As such sentiments gained more and more converts, the impudence of the opposite party abated, so that the former from preaching started to come to blows with those who still continued the work of demolition, pushed them aside and snatched the implements from their hands. The latter fumed and threatened and attempted to retaliate; but their cause was lost. The predominating cry became "Prison! Justice! Ferrer!" After some skirmishing the siege was raised and the doorway fell into the hands of the relievers, who took up their position around it to guard against new assaults and prepare for Ferrer's admission. One of them, calling to those within (there was no lack of chinks to speak through), instructed them that succor was arriving and that the director should be got ready "to be taken at once—to prison. Ahem! do you understand?"

"Is that the Ferrer who helpeth to make edicts?" inquired Renzo, recalling the "Vidit Ferrer" which the man of the law had bawled into his ear and showed subscribed to a certain very memorable instrument.

"Yes; the high-chancellor," was the reply.

"He's a fair-handed sort, is he not?"

"You may say that he is fair-handed. 'Tis he who gave us bread cheap, which the others would not tolerate; and now he cometh to imprison the director, who would not deal righteously."

It goes without saying that Renzo was for Ferrer at once. He wanted to join him forthwith. It was not easy, but by exerting a mountaineer's prowess in shoving and shouldering he succeeded in wedging his way to the very front rank of spectators just facing the carriage.

The latter had by now advanced some little distance into the press and was detained by one of those frequent halts inseparable from travel of this kind. The old man bobbed from side to side, showing first at one window then at the other a smiling face

composed to a look of benignant humility—just such a face as he had been holding in reserve against the time when he should find himself in the presence of Philip IV, but which he was constrained to draw upon in the present emergency. His lips moved also, but the Babel about him, the rumble of voices, the very acclamations he himself evoked, permitted but few of his words to be heard, and these by very few persons. So he enforced his meaning by pantomime; now kissing his hand right and left in recognition of the public's esteem; now gently waving the crowd aside, to make room for his carriage; now courteously raising his hand to impose silence. When he had obtained a semblance of it, his next neighbors heard and re-echoed the words: "Bread; yes. Abundance, yes, yes. I am come to wreak justice. Under your favor, a little more room." Then, overwhelmed and almost stifled by the thunder of voices, the dense sea of faces hemming him in and the number of eyes bent in his direction, he drew in his head, puffed out his cheeks and, heaving a great sigh, muttered to himself: *"Por mi vida, que de gente."*[1]

"Long live Ferrer! Have no fear. You are an honest man. Bread, bread!"

"Yes, yes; bread," replied Ferrer. "Abundance of it, ye have my word." Here he put his hand to his heart.

"A little more room," he quickly subjoined. "I come to take him off to prison, to the retribution he deserves," adding in an undertone: *"si es culpable."*[2] Then, leaning towards his coachman, *"Adelante, Pedro, si puedes,"*[3] he urged.

The coachman likewise beamed affably upon the populace, as if he had been some great personage, and meanwhile waved his whip right and left with ineffable deference, as he begged his inconvenient auditors to draw back somewhat deeper into the crush. "Under your favor, my masters, a little more room," he said in his turn; "a very little more—just enough to pass."

In the meantime the more active class of well-wishers exerted themselves to give effect to the requests so civilly preferred.

[1] On my life, what a crowd.

[2] If he is guilty.

[3] Proceed, if you can, Peter.

Some of them went before the horses, urging the people by soft words and gently repelling hands to retire: "Come, my masters, stand aside. A little room." Others performed a similar service at either side of the coach, that it might pass without inflicting any indignity upon corns or noses, which, besides the physical harm involved, would have exposed Antonio Ferrer's ascendancy to grave peril.

Renzo, after being for some few moments lost in admiration of the picture which the latter presented of a handsome old age—somewhat discomposed, it is true, by the trying ordeal through which he was passing and worn by fatigue, yet enlivened by solicitude and transfigured, so to speak, by the hope of snatching a man from mortal anguish—Renzo, I say, put aside all thoughts of going away and determined to stand by Ferrer until his purpose was accomplished. Pursuant to this resolution, he immediately joined the others in clearing a way; nor was he the least active of the participators. As soon as a space was cleared, the coachman would be invited by more than one to proceed, while they either drew aside or continued the work farther ahead. Then his master would say: *"Adelante, presto, con juicio,"*[4] and the carriage would advance. From time to time Ferrer would intersperse the salutations which he lavished indiscriminately upon the public with grateful acknowledgments of a more particular nature, accompanied by a knowing smile, to those whom he saw laboring in his behalf; and of these smiles more than one fell to the share of Renzo, who in truth well merited such a meed, since he served the high-chancellor in better stead that day than the cleverest of secretaries could have done. To the youthful mountaineer, captivated by the graciousness of his hero, it almost appeared as if he had established himself on a footing of friendship with Antonio Ferrer.

The carriage, once started, continued on, more or less slowly and not without sundry other pauses. The total distance to be covered was perhaps not more than a musket-shot; but from the point of view of time consumed it might well have appeared a good day's journey even to one in less than Ferrer's feverish

[4] Proceed faster, with prudence.

haste. The throng surged around him, right and left, fore and aft, like the billows of the ocean around a ship tossed by the tempest; but higher, more strident and more deafening than tempest's roar rose the din of tumult. Ferrer, looking from side to side and trying to pose at the same time that he was gesticulating, strained his ears to catch a remark from which he might take his cue. He also sought to keep up some pretence of dialogue with his cohort of friends; but it was a difficult matter—more difficult than any demands which had yet been made upon his statesmanship after long years of high-chancellorship. Every once in a while, however, some word or phrase, repeated by a group along his route, sounded out like the bursting of a bomb above all the racket of squibs and rockets at a display of fireworks. Fashioning his replies to the tenor of these cries, or repeating words which, at all events, he knew should be most acceptable or which some crisis seemed to demand, he was kept talking the whole length of the route.

"Yes, yes, good sirs; bread, abundance of it. I shall take him to prison myself. He shall be punished (*si es culpable*). Yes, yes; I shall attend to it personally; bread shall be cheap. *Asi es*—It standeth thus, I should say: Our lord the king is loath to have his liege vassals suffer hunger. *Ox! ox! guardaos;*[5] do yourselves no hurt, my masters. *Pedro, adelante, con juicio.* Abundance, abundance. A little room, so please you. Yes, bread, plenty of bread. To prison; yes, yes; to prison. What is it, friend?" The latter inquiry was directed at a man who had thrust his head and shoulders through the carriage-window and was bawling out some words of advice, or entreaty, or may be of approbation; but even before the question reached home he was dragged back by some one who saw him on the point of being crushed by the wheel. Keeping up this fire of sallies and replies, amid incessant acclamations and also some shouts of opposition which arose here and there but were immediately stifled, Ferrer at length reached the house, thanks chiefly to his good-hearted bodyguard.

Their fellows. who, as we have said, were already on the scene

[5] Oh, oh! look out!

with the same good-will, had in the meanwhile been at work clearing and reclearing a little space. They entreated, they argued, they threatened. At length, by trampling and pushing right and left, with the redoubled zest and renewed strength that comes from seeing one's end nearly attained, they succeeded in cleaving the throng in two and then in forcing back both divisions far enough to make a little opening between the house and the carriage, which had stopped opposite. Renzo, who, doing a turn now as marshal, now as guard, had arrived together with the vehicle, was able to take his place in one of the front ranks of sympathizers, who at the same time formed a lane for the carriage to pass and a breakwater to the surging masses of humanity behind them. While he helped to dam one of these tides with his ponderous shoulders, he found himself in a good situation also to observe what was going on.

Ferrer drew a great breath of relief when he saw this small area cleared of people and the door still closed. "Closed" here means not open in the ordinary sense. But the hinges were almost detached from the posts. The battered and splintered double door permitted the beholder to see through a great chink in the middle, where the oak had been violently sprung, a piece of twisted chain, hanging slack and almost torn off, which, if we can say so much, held the whole together. Some honest citizen put his mouth to this vent and called loudly upon those within to unfasten the door. Another hurriedly opened the coach. The old man thrust out his head, arose, and, taking hold of the worthy man's arm, got down on the step of the carriage.

The crowd on both sides stood on tiptoe to see, heads thrown back and beards uptilted. The universal curiosity and attention created a moment of general silence. Ferrer, pausing for that moment upon the carriage-step, glanced his eye from side to side, bowed to the populace as if from a pulpit, and, putting his left hand to his breast, shouted: "Bread and justice." Then, without any affectation or indecision, he alighted, clothed as he was in his robes of state, amid shouting which made the welkin ring.

Meanwhile those inside had opened the door,—or what was left

of it,—drawing the chain, and together with it the half-pulled staples, and widening the breach just enough to admit the thrice-welcome guest. "Quick, quick," he said. "Open wide and let me through. And ye, my hearts-of-oak, hold back the mob. Let them not get at me, in Heaven's name. Keep open a little breathing-space for anon—Hold, hold, good sirs; one moment," he subjoined to those within. "Softly with those doors. Let me through. Ouch! my ribs! I commend my ribs to your mercy. Now shut it. No; hold, hold! my gown, my gown!" It would, in fact, have remained in the grip of the closing door, had not Ferrer with great deliberation gathered up the train, which disappeared like the tail of a serpent gliding into its hole before the eyes of the pursuers.

Once closed, the door was again barricaded as well as might be. Without, those who had constituted themselves Ferrer's bodyguard, strained shoulders, arms and voices to keep the space open, at the same time praying Heaven that he would not be long.

"Quick, quick," Ferrer meanwhile was urging the servants, who crowded breathlessly around him at the foot of the stairs, crying: "God bless you! Ah, excellency! Oh, excellency! Ugh, excellency!"

"Quick, quick," Ferrer repeated. "Where is that plague of a man?"

The director was descending the stairs, half carried, half dragged by others of his servants. He was white as a sheet. When he saw his savior, he heaved a great sigh of relief. His heart resumed its beating, a little life began to surge through his legs, some color returned to his cheek, and, running more or less unsteadily towards Ferrer, "I am in the hands of God," he said —"in the hands of God and those of your excellency. But how are we to get out? We are surrounded by those who want my life."

"*Venga usted con migo,*[6] and take courage. My carriage is without. Come quick." Taking him by the hand, he led him to-

[6] Come with me, my lord.

wards the door, reassuring him the whole way, but saying inwardly the while, *"Aqui esta el busilis. Dios nos valga!"*[7]

Ferrer went out first. The other followed crouching after, clinging to the tutelary robe like a child to its mother's apron. Those who had kept the approach to the house unobstructed now contrived, by waving their hands and their caps in the air, to screen the director, as if by a cloud, from the sight of the populace and the danger it portended. He entered the carriage first and effaced himself in a corner. Ferrer got in after, and the carriage-door was slammed shut. The populace saw the transaction as in a dream, surmised what had taken place, and sent up a roar of plaudits and imprecations.

The stage which remained might well seem to be the most difficult and perilous part of the whole journey. But the public had sufficiently manifested its consent that the director should go to prison, and during the halt many of those who had assisted Ferrer's progress had busied themselves to such good purpose that a kind of path had been opened up through the throng, so that the coach could move along somewhat more briskly and steadily on its return trip. As it advanced, the dammed-up crowd closed in and mingled again in its wake.

Hardly had Ferrer seated himself, than he leaned over and adjured the director by all that is holy to stay huddled close and not show himself; but the admonition was superfluous. He, on his part, had to keep in view, so as to attract the attention of the public to himself and hold it. And again during the whole route, as on the first occasion, he directed to his mercurial audience the most continuous discourse in point of time, and the most disconnected in point of sense, that was ever pronounced, interrupting it, moreover, from time to time with some hurried interjection in Spanish which he turned to whisper into the ear of his crouching companion.

"Aye, aye, good sirs; bread and justice. Aye, to the castle, to prison, under my custody. Thanks, thanks, my fervent thanks. Nay, nay; he shall not escape. (*Por ablandarlos.*)[8] Too

[7] Now comes the rub. God help us!

[8] Just to flatter them.

true; it shall be looked into—it shall be seen to. I also wish well to your worship. Yes; condign punishment. (*Esto lo digo por su bien.*)[9] Yes, a fair price, an honest price, and retribution to all starvers. Of your goodness, draw aside. Yes, yes; I am an honorable man and a friend of the people. He shall be punished. 'Tis true; he is a scoundrel, a criminal. (*Perdone, usted.*)[10] He'll smoke for it, he'll smoke for it—*si es culpable.* Yes, yes; the bakers will be taught their duty. Long live the king and the good citizens of Milan, his most loyal vassals. He'll get his due, he'll get his due. (*Animo; estamos ya quasi fuera.*)"[11]

They had, in fact, passed through the thickest of the press and were on the point of getting clear of it altogether. It was then that Ferrer, while he was beginning to rest his lungs a little, saw the belated succor, the Spanish soldiery—who were not entirely useless towards the end, when, under the direction and protecting auspices of a few citizens, they had helped to send some of the people quietly about their business and keep the final exit clear of obstruction. At the arrival of the coach they drew themselves up into line and presented arms to the high-chancellor, who saluted, here again, right and left, and to the commanding officer, who approached somewhat nearer to make his salute, said, accompanying his words with a wave of the hand: "*Beso a usted las manos*"[12]—words which that official understood in the sense which they really bore, that is: "You have rendered me fine assistance." In reply he saluted a second time and shrugged his shoulders. Indeed it was a case of *Cedant arma togae;* but at that moment Ferrer had no head for quoting, and besides, his words would have been wasted, inasmuch as the officer did not understand Latin.

Pedro felt again himself in passing through this double file of fusiliers with their muskets elevated so respectfully. His dismay left him entirely. He remembered again who he was and who his passengers were; and, crying: "Ho there, ho there!"

[9] I say so for your good

[10] Pardon, my lord.

[11] Courage; we are almost through.

[12] I kiss your lordship's hand.

without further ceremonious addition to the crowd, which by now was thin enough to be treated with such scant courtesy, lashed the horses and sent them plunging towards the castle.

"Levantese, levantesi; estamos ya fuera,"[13] said Ferrer to the director, who, reassured by the discontinuance of yelling, the rapid motion of the carriage and the sound of these words, disentangled himself from the knot into which he was tied and arose. Already somewhat recovered, he began to shower his thanks over and over again on his liberator. The latter, after condoling with him on his perils and felicitating him on his escape, "Ah!" he exclaimed, beating his bald pate with his hand, *"Que dira de esto su excelencia,*[14] who is already at his wit's end about that cursed Casale, which will not yield? *Que dira el conde duque,*[15] who taketh umbrage if a leaf stirreth more than its wont? *Que dira el rey nuestro señor,*[16] who also must get wind of such a hullabaloo? What will be the end of it all? *Dios lo sabe."*[17]

"Ah! for me, I shall be embroiled no longer," said the director. "I summon myself hence. I hereby resign my office into the hands of your excellency and take myself off to some cave in the mountainside to lead a hermit's life far, far away from this swinish people."

"Usted shall do that which is best *por el servicio de su magestad,"*[18] gravely replied the chancellor.

"His majesty desireth not my death," rejoined the director. "A cave, a cave, far from such brutes!"

What came of this resolve our author does not say, but after accompanying him as far as the castle, ignores his concerns entirely.

[13] Rise up, rise up; we are through.
[14] What will his excellency say of all this?
[15] What will the count-duke say?
[16] What will our lord the king say?
[17] God knows.
[18] Your lordship will do etc. for the service of his majesty.

Chapter XIV

The crowd that remained began to disperse, ebbing away to right and left by one street or another. Some went to their homes to busy themselves with problems of their own. Some wandered off to breathe in peace after so many hours of turmoil or to seek out friends and gossip of the day's stirring events. The same dispersal went on through the other approach to the street, which was now so sparsely peopled that the platoon of Spaniards could advance without resistance and establish themselves in front of the director's. The dregs of the tumult (so to speak) had collected hard by—a crew of rascals who, not content with the tame, abortive climax to such elaborate preliminaries, were venting themselves, some by grumbling, some by cursing and others by mooting the possibility of still further attempts—which possibility they proceeded to test by kicking or throwing themselves against the much-abused door, which had once more been barricaded as well as means permitted. At the arrival of the soldiery they went off in the opposite direction, some post-haste, others sauntering along with ostentatious leisure as if reluctant to depart, leaving the field to the fusiliers, who took possession and established guard over the house and street. But knots of loiterers dotted all the streets of the neighborhood. Wherever two or three persons stood chatting, three, or four, or twenty more gathered about them. Here, some individual started off by himself; there, a whole group strolled away together—like the cloud-wracks which sometimes scud across a clear sky after a storm and cause the observer to remark that the weather is not yet settled. The reader is left to imagine the Babel created by so much conflicting talk. While one related with all his powers of emphasis the particular occurrences he had witnessed, another was narrating what had befallen himself. Some congratulated themselves on the happy outcome, praising Ferrer and

prophesying calamity for the director. Others grinned and said: "Never believe that they will kill him. Wolf eateth not wolf." Still others, whose spirits were sorer, grumbled that the thing had miscarried utterly, that they had been simply hoodwinked, that it was madness to make such a pother only to let themselves be made a laughing-stock in the end.

Meanwhile the sun had set, turning all objects a uniform grey, and many persons, weary of the day's vicissitudes and surfeited with gossiping in the dark, were returning home. Our young friend, after helping the coach on its way as long as there was need of help and himself passing in its wake between the two files of soldiers, as if in triumph, felicitated himself upon seeing it speed off unhampered and safe from danger. He continued on with the crowd a little farther and then turned at the first corner to breathe at his ease as well as another. After a few steps in the clear, amid the tumultuous confusion of so many recent emotions and spectacles, he felt a pressing need of food and sleep, and began to look about him for the sign of an inn, it being too late to return to the Capuchin monastery. Gaping about thus as he walked along, he fell in with a group of stragglers, and, upon halting his steps, he learned that they were discussing prospects and plans for the morrow. Having paused for a moment to listen, he could not refrain from having his say, too, deeming it no presumption for one who had done so much to suggest a little. Convinced by all he had that day seen that to set a project afoot it needed henceforth only to conciliate the favor of the man in the street, "Masters mine," he bawled out in the tone of an exordium, "may I speak my humble mind also? It appeareth thus to my poor wit: that there is more swindling than in the matter of bread; and, since it is plain to see after today that justice cometh by making ourselves heard, it behooveth us to press on till we have put a stop to all their other rascalities and the world deals somewhat after a Christian fashion. Do I speak sooth or no, my masters, when I say that there is a handful of tyrants who invert the ten commandments in their conduct and go out of their way to do all kind of hurt to quiet, unsuspecting poor folk, and then always have the

right of it—nay, even holding their heads the higher after some unwonted dastardy as if the grievance were theirs? Milan must have its share of such."

"Only too many," quoth a voice.

"Said I not so?" resumed Renzo. "Rumor hath not been idle amongst us. And besides, doth it not stand to reason? Here is one of their number, let us say, who divideth his time between Milan and the country. If he plays the de'il abroad there, he can scarce be an angel here at home, I ween. Now, my masters, tell me when have you seen any of these dogs in pound? And what is still more grievous (and this I can vouch for to a certainty) is that there be good decrees, printed fair, to punish them—not idle, prating decrees, neither, but pat to the purpose, such that you and I could not better them one whit, with every deviltry plainly described, just as it is wont to happen, and a good, round penalty provided for each. And it is set forth therein 'Whether they be villain or churl' with all the rest of the blessed rigmarole. But see you now; let one of you go to doctor, scribe or pharisee, and ask him for the redress which the law promiseth, and he will give you as short shrift as the pope would a pickpocket, so as to make an honest fellow's blood fairly boil within him. The king and the king's government, 'tis plain to see, would have the rogues punished; but it skills nothing, because they are leagued together.

"What it behooveth us to do is to break their league. Let us to Ferrer in the morning—that same honorable, democratic gentleman, whom we could all see for ourselves today consorting so gladly with poor folk, exerting himself to hear their allegations and speaking them so fair in answer. Let us go to him and apprise him of the state of affairs. For my own part, I shall have some precious matters for his ear; how I have seen with my own eyes a decree bravely garnished with arms above and bearing as its authors three powerful names beneath; and one of the three, as I tell you I saw with my own eyes, was Ferrer's. Now this decree would have righted all my wrongs, and lo! a jurisconsult whom I asked to get the law for me, as these three worshipful men were minded to grant it (and Ferrer

among them)—this jurist, after showing me the decree himself (which is the best of all, ha! ha! ha!), will be going on as if I had proposed downright follies to him. I trow that when the good old man heareth of such practices—for he can not know everything that goeth on, especially outside the city, he will be loath that such a distemper should longer endure and will soon find its proper physic. And this is to say nothing of the satisfaction that they, whose handiwork the decrees be, will derive from seeing them obeyed; since it is scorn to their name and a foul slur upon their honor thus to have set them at naught. If then the overweening knaves will not brook the bridle, but must run amuck, let us be prepared to hold up his hands, as we did today. Far be from me to say that his honor should scour the country in his coach for all the scoundrels, oppressors and tyrants in the land to lay them by the heels—that would crave Noah's ark itself. It needs only that he issue orders to the proper functionaries (and that, not only in Milan, but all around), that his decrees must be lived up to and that a warrant be sued out squarely for every felony. And then, when prison hath been threatened, let prison be pronounced, and when the galleys have been threatened, let galleys be pronounced; and let the podestàs be instructed to mete out the full rigor of the law, and, if they will not, let them be sent a-packing to make way for better. Then, too, let us be by to hold up their hands. And let the doctors of the law be enjoined to hear poor people out and raise their voices to defend the right. Do I say well, my masters?"

Renzo had spoken with so much earnestness that, from his first words, a great part of the assemblage suspended their own conversation and turned to him, and at a certain stage of his discourse all had become his auditors. A confused noise of plaudits, of "Bravo! most certainly! He is right. Only too true," was his audience's reply to the sentiments he expressed.

Critics, however, were not lacking. "Fudge!" said one. "To give heed to these mountain louts, they are all barristers." And off he went. "Now," grumbled another, "every runagate will

have his say, and by putting too many irons in the fire we shall end by not having cheap bread, which is why we mutinied."

Renzo, however, heard only the compliments. One grasped him by the right hand, another by the left, amid a general exchange of "Good nights. Until tomorrow—Where?—The cathedral-square—all right—all right—Something will be doing—Something will be doing."

"Which of you kind sirs will show me the way to an inn, where I may get a bite to eat and a poor man's berth for the night?"

"I am at your service, good youth," said a man who had listened attentively to the harangue but who had remained silent up to this. "I know a tavern just suited to your needs, and I shall recommend you to the landlord, who is a friend of mine and as honest as the sun."

"Is it near?" asked Renzo.

"Not far," replied the other.

The meeting broke up, and Renzo, after shaking many strange hands, set out with his unknown guide with many thanks for the courtesy.

"And wherefore?" quoth the latter. "One hand must scratch the other. Are we not bound to aid our neighbor?" On the way he asked Renzo now one question, now another, by way of making talk. "Not to be inquisitive, but to my eyes you appear wayworn—where is your home?"

"I come," answered Renzo, "all the way from Lecco."

"All the way from Lecco? Is Lecco your home?"

"Lecco, yes—that is, the district of Lecco."

"My poor youth! I judge by what you have said that you have been put upon outrageously."

"Ah! my dear sir, I had to speak somewhat diplomatically, so as not to broach my own concerns in public, but—enough! Some day 'twill appear, and then—But yon sign beckoneth me to an inn, and by my troth I have no mind to go farther."

"No, no; come whither I have said. It's just beyond. You'll fare ill here."

"Pshaw!" replied the youth. "I am not used to being coddled. Some homely provender and a bed of husks are all I require.

To come by them quickly concerns me more nearly. 'Tis Providence's own inn, I say!" With this he entered a door of very uninviting aspect. Over it hung the sign of the "Full Moon."

"Very well; I'll conduct you, since you will have it so," said the unknown following him in.

"You need bother yourself no further," rejoined Renzo. "Still," he added, " 'twould pleasure me greatly if you would come in and empty a glass with me."

"I accept your tender," replied the other, going ahead of Renzo, in right of his better acquaintance, through a small courtyard to the door of the kitchen. He raised the latch and entered with his companion into the interior. Two lamps, suspended from the rafters of the ceiling, spread a dim light around. A goodly number of people were sitting (sitting is not necessarily a form of idleness) on benches at either side of a long, narrow table which occupied almost one whole end of the room. Here and there one saw the cloth laid and a cover set, and here and there again cards or dice, speeding back and forth on their mission, but everywhere glasses and decanters. One saw also the glint of flying *berlinghe, reali* and *parpagliole,* which, if they had been able to talk, would likely have said: We were this morning in the till of a certain bake-shop, or in the pocket of some spectator at the riot, who was so intent on watching the progress of public affairs that he forgot to keep an eye on his petty private interests.

The uproar was prodigious. A tapster was dashing back and forth like mad, ministering at the same time to the table and the chess-boards. The landlord was sitting on a stool under the chimney-hood, apparently engrossed in certain figures that he was making and then unmaking with the tongs in the ashes, but in reality alive to everything that was going on about him. He arose at the sound of the latch and went out to meet the newcomers. Seeing the conductor, "An apoplexy seize thee," he said under his breath, "that thou shouldst always be getting between my legs, and when I have the least need of thee!" Then, stealing a hurried glance at Renzo, he said—also to himself: "I know thee not, fair youth; but, coming with such a

huntsman, thou art either hare or hound, and before thou hast two words out of thy mouth, I shall know which." However, of these reflections no trace appeared upon the landlord's face, which remained as unmoved as a portrait—a full, shiny spread of face, with a bushy, reddish beard and a pair of clear, steady eyes.

"Your wishes, good sirs," he said aloud.

"First of all, a stoup of good, unadulterated wine," said Renzo, "and then a bite to eat." So saying, he threw himself upon the bench towards the end of the table and let out a resounding "Ah!" as who should say: "A bench goeth well after being up and doing so long." But suddenly there flashed before his mind the thought of the table at which he had sat last, with Lucia and Agnese, and he heaved a sigh. He shook his head, as if to drive away the thought, and saw the landlord coming with wine. His companion had seated himself opposite Renzo. The latter at once filled the other's glass, saying: "To wash down the dust." Then filling his own, he quaffed its contents at a gulp.

"What can you give me to eat?" he said to the landlord.

"I have some stew, if it please you," replied the latter.

"Capital; some stew."

"You shall be served," said the landlord to Renzo; and to his apprentice: "Serve this stranger." He started back towards the chimney. "But—" he observed as an afterthought, "today —there is no bread in the house today."

"As for bread," quoth Renzo in a loud voice, laughing, "Providence hath given thought to it." And, drawing forth the third and last of the loaves he had picked up beneath the Cross of St. Dennis, he brandished it aloft and cried: "Behold the grist of Providence!"

At the exclamation many turned their heads, and seeing such a trophy in the air, one of them roared: "Hurrah for cheap bread!"

"Cheap, say you," said Renzo. "Nay, *gratis et amore.*"

"Better yet, better yet."

"Still," Renzo subjoined, "I would not have your honors think

any ill. It hath not been filched. I found it lying on the ground and would cheerfully pay the owner, could he also be found."

"Bravo! bravo!" cried the merry men, grinning more broadly. To not one of them did it occur that his words were true.

"They think I jest, but 'tis exactly as I say," Renzo explained to his conductor; and, turning the loaf around in his hand, he added: "See how they have served it. It looks like a cocked hat. What a jam it was! 'Twould have fared ill with those whose bones are something fragile." Forthwith, having devoured three or four mouthfuls, he sent after them a second glass of wine, observing: "This bread will not go down of itself, my wizand was never so dry. But it was famous shouting."

"Prepare a good bed for this worthy youth," said his guide. "He intendeth to sleep here."

"You wish to sleep here?" inquired the landlord, approaching the table.

"To be sure," replied Renzo. "A modest berth. It needs only that the sheets have known soap and water. I am poor but used to cleanliness."

"Oh, if that be all!" retorted the landlord and went to his desk in a corner of the kitchen, returning with an ink-well and a sheet of paper in one hand and a pen in other.

"What is the meaning of all this?" exclaimed Renzo, gorging down a mouthful of the stew which the apprentice had set before him. Then, with a smile of wonderment, "Is this one of the sheets?" he pursued.

The landlord, without replying, set down the ink and paper, and, leaning his left arm upon the table and planting the elbow of his right with the pen in his grasp in front of him, he raised his face to Renzo and said: "Be good enough to tell me your name, your surname and residence."

"What?" said Renzo. "What have all these to do with beds?"

"I do my duty," said the landlord, looking the companion in the face. "We are obliged to render an account of every person who comes to us for lodging: *'His name and surname, of what country he is, on what business bent, whether armed . . . how long he is to tarry.'*—They are the words of the edict."

Before answering, Renzo drained another glass. It was the third, and from that on I fear we shall be unable to count. "Hah! hah!" he then said, "you have an edict. Well, for the nonce I am a doctor of the law, and so I know what account to make of edicts."

"I am in earnest," said the landlord, looking over at Renzo's mute companion. He went again to the desk, and taking from the drawer a great sheet of paper which was nothing more nor less than a copy of the edict, he returned and spread it before the eyes of Renzo.

"Hah! behold!" exclaimed the latter, with one hand raising the replenished glass and tossing it off, while with the other he pointed towards the edict. "Behold what a beautiful missal-leaf. I am overjoyed indeed. I know that crest; I know that Arian's head with the rope round his neck." (Edicts were then surmounted by the governor's coat-of-arms, and one of the salient insignia on those of Don Gonzalo Fernandez de Cordova was a Moorish king chained up by the neck.) "It says: 'Command who can, and obey who will.' When that head sends to the galleys Don—peace! I know whom—as another missal-leaf, the twin-brother of this one, says shall be done; and when it brings to pass that an honest lad can marry an honest lass who is well content to have him to husband, then shall I give that head my name, and a kiss, too, for good measure. Perhaps I may have reasons for not telling my name. What a pox! If a blackguard with a crew of other blackguards at his beck—for had he been alone I"—(he finished the phrase with a gesture) —"if a blackguardly noble wished to know my whereabouts to serve me one of his scurvy tricks, would that head make shift to help me, I'd like to know? I must tell my business, eh! This is a new fandango, too. Let us say I am come to Milan to confess. But I wish to confess to a Capuchin, as I might say, and not to mine host."

The landlord remained silent, keeping his eyes always on Renzo's guide, who made no sign whatever. Renzo, we are loath to say, gulped down another glass and went on: "Here is an argument, my dear landlord, which will carry conviction into

your soul. If edicts which show favor to good Christian folk are dross, so are those which show disfavor, and by better right. Therefore remove all this litter, and bring instead another bottle, seeing that this one is done for. Listen how it croaks, landlord," he said, striking it lightly with his knuckles.

This time also Renzo had by gradual stages attracted the attention of the bystanders, and this time also was he applauded by his audience.

"What am I to do?" inquired the landlord, looking at the unknown, who was not so to him.

"Go to, go to," cried out not a few of the merry company; "the youth is in the right. They are all delusions and snares. Today we have a new law."

Under cover of the shouting the unknown gave mine host a glance of reproof for so overt an interrogation, saying at the same time: "Leave him to his own devices for the nonce. Make no scene."

"I've done my duty," said the landlord, adding under his breath: "Now I'm in the lee of the law." So soliloquizing, he took paper, pen, ink and edict up together to consign them, with the empty bottle, to the apprentice.

"More of the same," instructed Renzo. "He's a good character and I am going to put him to sleep like the other without asking his name and surname, and of what country he is, and what bringeth him hither, and whether he will stay in town for a spell."

"Some of the same," said the landlord to the apprentice, handing him the empty bottle. Returning to his seat in the chimney, "A hare in good sooth," he thought, as he began another chapter in the ashes; "and what hands you have fallen into. Stupid bumpkin! if you would hang, why, go hang, but the landlord of the Full Moon is not going bail for your follies."

Renzo thanked his conductor and all those who had taken part with him. "Good friends," he said, "now I see that all honest fellows hold out their hands to one another and stand shoulder to shoulder." Then, stretching out his hand at arm's length and striking again the pose of an orator, "Is it not great

matter for wonderment," he asked, "that all those who rule must be always lugging in pen, ink and paper? Forever brandishing their pens! What a frenzy possesseth them—these noble folk—to be wielding quills!"

"Ho! my honest friend from the hills, would you know the reason?" said one of the players, laughing—for he was a winner.

"Let us have it," replied Renzo.

"The reason is this," said he. "Those nobles are they who eat the goose, and they must find some use for so very, very many quills."

They all set to laughing—excepting the losing gamester.

"Soho!" said Renzo; "he is a poet, that one. So you have poets here, too. They sprout everywhere nowadays. I have a vein of it myself, and at times turn some curious quips—but that is when things go well with me."

To understand this silliness of poor Renzo's, the reader must know that, with the vulgar of Milan, and still more in the outlying country, "poet" did not then mean, as for every man who is not a villain it should mean, a sacred genius, an inhabitant of Pindus, a pupil of the Muses, but a sort of cracked-brained fellow, who in his words and actions laid more claim to singularity and wittiness than good sense. To such a degree does that marplot, the rabble, dare to abuse words and make them signify things so foreign to their legitimate meaning! What is there in common, I ask, between a poet and a crack-brain?

"Nay, but I'll tell you the real reason," resumed Renzo. "It is because they hold the quill themselves; and so their words fly off and disappear, while they are very alert with that same quill to impale every word an honest poor fellow utters and pillory it upon paper to use as time and tide require. Then they have another vice. When they would embroil some honest poor lad with no book-learning but not altogether without—I know what I would say" (here, by way of conveying what he meant, he began tapping his forehead as if his finger were an animated battering-ram), "and they perceive that he begins to see through the intrigue, presto! they throw in some words of Latin to addle his wit and make him lose the thread of the story. Enough; let

such practices cease. Today we transacted our business squarely in the mother-tongue and without pen, ink and paper; and to-morrow, if people will contain themselves, we shall do better still—but without harming a hair of any one's head and in all justice."

Meanwhile some of the company had resumed their gaming, others their eating, others their wrangling, as the case might be. New guests were arriving and old ones leaving. None escaped the watchfulness of the landlord—all of which has naught to do with our tale. Even Renzo's unknown pilot was on tenter-hooks to be going. He had no apparent business in the place, still he was loath to leave without some further conversation in private with our young friend. Turning to him, he reopened the topic of bread, and after a few of those phrases which had for some time been in everybody's mouth, he broached a project of his own. "Now, were I in authority," said he, "I would find a way to make things run smoothly."

"What would you do?" asked Renzo, looking at him with eyes which shone more brightly than they ought and twisting his mouth awry in an effort to be attentive.

"What would I do?" said the other. "I would have bread for all, rich and poor alike."

"Ah! that is as should be," said Renzo.

"See how I would manage. There should be a fair market price, that all may live. Then, bread should be divided according to the number of mouths; because there be some so unconscionably greedy that they would have all for themselves and, with their squeezing and grabbing and over-reaching, there would be no bread for the poor. Therefore the bread must be apportioned. And how? Thus. A ticket should be issued to each family, due regard being had to the number of mouths, to go and get bread at the baker's. To me, for instance, they would issue a ticket to this effect: Antonio Fusella, by trade an armorer, with a wife and four children, all bread-eaters (note that well!). He is to get so much bread and pay so many pence. But no unfairness; due proportion being always kept between mouths

and bread. To you, for instance, they would make out a ticket for—your name?"

"Lorenzo Tramaglino," said the youth, who was so beguiled by the plan that the employment of pen, paper and ink seemed perfectly natural and the taking of names a logical step towards its execution.

"Very good," said the unknown. "Have you a wife and children?"

"I should have by right—not children; 'tis too soon—but a wife—did things go as they should."

"Ah! you are single. Have patience, but your portion must be smaller."

"That is fair. But if soon, as I hope—and with God's help—Enough! And when I am married?"

"Then your ticket will be changed and your portion increased. Always in ratio to the number of mouths, as I have said," answered the unknown, rising from the bench.

"That is as should be," roared Renzo; "and," he continued in the same high tone, pounding the table with his fist, "why do they not make such a law?"

"How am I to tell? Meanwhile I give you good-night and take my leave, because my wife and children will have been waiting, I ween, this long time."

"Another drop, another drop," bawled Renzo, filling the other's glass and pulling him by the doublet to force him again to his seat. "Another drop. Put not such an affront upon me."

But his friend tore himself free, and, leaving Renzo to his jumbled maunderings of solicitation and reproof, again bade him good-night and departed. Renzo followed him with his sermonizings as far as the street, then collapsed on the bench. Seeing the tapster pass by as he sat staring at the refilled glass, he beckoned him to stop, as if he had some communication to make. Then, pointing at the rejected draught, "Lo!" he said, pronouncing the words with a solemn slowness and articulating each syllable with deliberate care; "I had prepared it for that worthy gentleman—see, brimming—just like a friend—and he'd none of it. Strange notions people take into their heads at times. But

the blame is not mine; I showed the goodness of my heart. Well, since 'tis done, it must not go by default." So saying, he took it and drained it at a swallow.

"I understand," quoth the youth, going his ways.

"Ah! even you understand," rejoined Renzo; "then is it true. When arguments are sound . . . . ."

Here it needs all our love of truth to make us proceed faithfully with a narrative which does so little credit to a character of such importance that he might be called the hero of our story. But, for the same reasons of impartiality, we should state that this was the first time that a mishap of this kind had befallen Renzo, whose very inexperience was to a great extent the reason of this first debauch proving so fatal. The few glasses that in the beginning he had tossed off hand-running, contrary to his settled habits, partly to slake his burning thirst, partly because of a certain exaltation of mind that prevented him from observing temperance in anything, went at once to his head; though they would have done no more to a practiced drinker than raise his thirst. In this connection our anonymous author makes an observation which we shall repeat, and let him who can say what it is worth. Habits of sobriety and probity, he says, carry with them this advantage, among others, that the more long-lived and deep-rooted they become in a man, the more sensitive he is to any the smallest departure from them, to the end that he forthwith remembers himself a while longer, and thus even his mistakes serve as schools of virtue.

Be that as it may, when these first fumes mounted to Renzo's head, words and wine continued to flow their respective ways without restraint or moderation, and at the point where we have left him he was already well in his cups. He felt a besetting desire to talk. There was no lack of listeners, or, at least, of men whom he could consider such, and for a while the words, too, came without balking and allowed themselves to be marshalled in some kind of order. But little by little the task of finishing his phrases began to get villainously difficult. The thought which had presented itself lifelike and vigorous to his mind faded and disappeared all of a sudden, and then the word

which had kept him waiting no longer fitted the case. In such straits, betrayed by one of those false instincts which under many circumstances lure men on to ruin, he applied himself anew to the execrable bottle. How the bottle could possibly be of help in such a situation, I leave to wiser heads than mine to say.

We shall relate only some of his countless utterances on that ill-omened night—the many more which we pass over would be entirely amiss, because, not only have they no sense, but they have not even a semblance of it—a necessary quality of printed books.

"Ah, landlord, landlord!" he began over again, following the person thus apostrophized with his eyes around the table and to his place under the chimney-hood, as often as not fixing them on vacancy, and talking all the while to the accompaniment of a loud clatter of tongues. "What a landlord it is. I cannot stomach it—that fraud about name and surname and business in hand. To an honest lad like me! You've shown scant courtesy. What rhyme or reason or satisfaction, to pinion honest lads down on paper? Do I say aright, my masters? Landlords should play the friend to all good young fellows. Hark'ee, hark'ee! landlord, I'd draw comparisons—to clinch my argument. They laugh, eh? I'm in somewhat high spirits, 'tis true, but I argue soundly. Tell me, I prithee, who is it keeps the pot a-boiling for you? Poor fellows like me, is it not? Do I say aright? Observe how often the worshipful edict-mongers come under your bush to drink a glassful."

"All water-sops," said one of Renzo's neighbors.

"They would keep their wits about them," added another, "to be able to lie at need."

"Ah!" bawled Renzo, "it is the poet who talks there. Therefore ye understand my arguments. Answer me this, then, landlord! Hath Ferrer, who is the best of the whole lot, ever come here to drink a carouse or spend a single farthing? And that bandog of a Don—I'm mum; because my wits are sharp—too sharp. Ferrer and Father Crrr—I know who—are two honest men; but there be few such. The old are worse than the young, and the young are—worse yet than the old. Still I am well

content that no blood was spilt. For shame! Leave such barbarities to the hangman. Bread; oh bread, yes. I got some knocks, but—I gave some, too. Make way there! Abundance! Hurrah! Yet even Ferrer—dabbling in Latin—*sies baraos trapolorum*. Accursed habit! Hurrah! Justice! Bread! Ah! that's the tune!—They should have been on hand then, those honest lads, when *dong! dong! dong!* rang out that cursed bell, and again *dong! dong! dong!* Sir priest would not have escaped then, you see. Hold him there—I know of whom I am thinking."

With this, his head drooped on his breast and he remained for some time as if lost in thought. Then, heaving a great sigh, he glanced up, his eyes damp and glistening and on his face a look of languishing tenderness so grotesque that it was well the object of his emotions could not see him at that moment. The wretches who had at first made sport of Renzo's impassioned and incoherent eloquence, now ridiculed his air of compunction still more. "Look at him," said his nearest neighbors. They all turned their heads in his direction and he became the laughing-stock of the whole room. Not that all of them were in their right senses, or even in their usual senses, whatever those may have been; but to speak sooth, none of them was so far gone in liquor as poor Renzo, and besides, he was a peasant. One after another they plied him with coarse or foolish questions and mocked him with their buffoonery. Renzo at one instant seemed to take umbrage, at another entered into the fun, or again, without giving heed to the voices around him, spoke along lines entirely foreign to their suggestions, but, whether answering his interlocutors or quizzing them in return, his bolts shot equally wide of the mark. Throughout these divagations an instinct of caution fortunately prevented him from mentioning persons, so that the name which must have been enthroned most prominently in his memory remained unspoken; and sorely vexed should we have been, had that name for which even we entertain some love and reverence, been dragged into such foul-mouthed conversation and lightly bandied about by obscene tongues.

Chapter XV

Mine host, seeing no sign of the fun subsiding, approached Renzo, and, courteously begging the others to desist, shook the young man by the shoulder and sought by persuasive arguments to make him understand that he should go to bed. Renzo harped persistently upon names and surnames, upon edicts and good-fellowship; however, the words "bed" and "sleep," sounded repeatedly in his ear, at last made their way to his brain. The words increased the craving for the thing signified, and a moment's lucid interval ensued. The modicum of wit which returned served to make him comprehend dimly that the greater part of it had fled—very much as the last remaining lighted candle of an illumination shows one the whole array of tapers that have expired. He plucked up courage, and, extending his hands, he braced himself against the table. He tried to arise, once, twice, sighed and staggered back. At the third attempt, assisted by the landlord, he got to his feet. The latter then steered him out between the table and the bench, supporting him the while, and, taking a light in one hand, he struggled towards the stair-door, with the other hand leading, or towing, his charge along after him. Arrived there, Renzo wheeled about at the volley of "Good-nights" that the others sent after him—and but for the dexterity of his supporter in keeping hold of his arm the move would have cost him a heavy fall—he wheeled about, therefore, and with the arm that remained free he went on weaving an arabesquework of salutations in the air.

"Let us to bed, to bed," said the landlord, dragging him along. He got him squeezed through the doorway, and with still greater effort pulled him to the top of the little stairway, whence he led him to the room which he had destined for his accommodation. The sight of the bed awaiting him gladdened Renzo's heart. He bent a tender glance upon the landlord, his eyes alternately

blazing and blinking like a pair of fireflies. He endeavored to balance himself on his own two legs and stretched forth his hand towards mine host's face to stroke his cheek in token of friendship and gratitude; but it was beyond his powers. "Kind friend," he contrived to say, "I now see that you are the right sort. A good deed this, to give an honest lad a bed. But that other was a scurvy kind of trick, anent names and surnames. Luckily I have a shrewd head-piece myself."

The landlord was surprised at such a display of coherence, and, knowing by long experience that men in that state are more than ordinarily given to changing their counsel, desired to profit by this momentary clarity to make still another tentative. "My dear son," quoth he with the utmost gentleness of voice and demeanor, "I did not so to be irksome or inquisitive. What wouldst thou? 'Tis the law, and we too must yield obedience; else would we be the first to feel the weight of its penalties. It is better to pleasure them, and—after all, what is involved? Great matter for fussing!—to speak but two words. Come—not for their sakes, but to do a favor to me—let us settle our business here between ourselves with none standing by. Tell me thy name and—and then go to bed with a quiet mind."

"Hah, you scoundrel!" exclaimed Renzo. "You thieving rogue! to come after me again with that infernal refrain of name, surname and business!"

"Hold your tongue, you clown, and go to bed," said the landlord.

But Renzo continued to bawl out louder still: "I know you now; you, too, are in the league. But stay, stay; I'll cook your goose." And, turning his head towards the stairs, he began to bellow still louder: "Ho, friends, the landlord is in the——"

"I did but jest," the latter halloed into Renzo's ear, as he pushed him towards the bed—"pure jest. Knew you not that I was but jesting?"

"Ah! jesting. Now you speak sense. If you did but jest—matter for jests they be." And with that, he fell prostrate on the bed.

"Come, come, undress; hurry," said the landlord, suiting the

example to the word. And need there was that he should do so. When Renzo was stripped of his doublet,—for get out of it himself he could not,—the landlord grabbed it and ran his fingers through the pockets to see if they contained any secret hoard. It was there; and, reflecting that his guest would have quite other hosts than himself to reckon with on the morrow and that his hoardings would fall into hands from which a landlord would find it hard to retrieve them, he decided to test his success in conducting still another negotiation.

"Thou art a good lad, a man of honor, art thou not?" quoth he.

"Good lad—man of honor," answered Renzo, fumbling at the buttons of those garments he had not yet been able to remove.

"Good," replied the landlord. "Then settle our little score now, since tomorrow I must be abroad on certain matters of business."

"Right enough," said Renzo. "I am shrewd, but not dishonest. Only, the money. Is this a time to look for it?"

"Here it is," said the landlord; and, bringing all his experience, all his patience and skill into play, he succeeded in finishing the transaction and compensating himself.

"Lend me a hand, till I finish undressing, landlord," said Renzo. "I perceive now myself that I am a very drowsy man."

The landlord lent the required assistance. He drew the covers over him besides, bade him a churlish good-night, and the other was already snoring. Then, under the impulse which at times leads us to contemplate the object of our wrath as well as that of our love, and which is perhaps naught else than the desire to become better acquainted with what acts powerfully upon our sensibilities, he paused a moment to survey his irksome guest, raising the light above his face and shielding his own eyes with his averted hand—almost after the manner in which Psyche is depicted stealing a glance at the lineaments of her unknown consort. "Fool of a greenhorn!" said he inwardly to the poor sleeper before him; "thou hast put thyself right in the path of trouble. Tomorrow thou wilt be able to say how it likes thee. Hildings that must go gadding about the world, without knowing

where the sun rises, to be embroiling yourselves and your neighbors in mischief."

So saying, or so thinking, he started out and locked the door of the chamber behind him. Halting on the landing of the stairway, he summoned his goodwife and told her to leave the children in care of a servant they had and go down to the kitchen to take his place. "I must be faring forth, thanks to a stranger that some ill wind hath blown hither," he subjoined; and he related briefly the annoying mishap. "Have an eye everywhere," he then continued, "and, above all, be prudent this cursed day. There is a pack of blackguards below there, who, between their drinking and the gustiness of their natures, give their tongues full rein. It needs only that some reckless fool——"

"Oh, I am no child. I know what is fitting as well as another. Up to the present, I believe, it cannot be said that——"

"Well, well, well; and see to it they pay their shot. And make believe not to hear them when they talk of the director of supplies, and the governor, and Ferrer, and the decurions, and knights, and Spain, and France and all such folderol, because to contradict is to invite immediate trouble, and to acquiesce is to invite trouble in the future. You know as well as I that sometimes those who inveigh the loudest— But enough. When certain topics are broached, turn your head and say 'Coming,' as if some one had called from another quarter. I shall try to return as soon as may be."

So saying, he went down with her into the kitchen and glanced his eyes around the room to see if any developments of consequence had arisen. With another glance at his wife, he recapitulated the instructions he had already given her, and, taking his hat and cloak off the peg and grasping in his hand a cudgel that stood in the corner, he went out. But, even in the act of going through these motions, he inwardly resumed the thread of apostrophizing he had begun at poor Renzo's bedside, and continued it as he pursued his way along the street.

"Pig-headed mountaineer!" (because, try as he would to dissemble, Renzo betrayed what he was by his words, his accent, his appearance and his actions). "Such a day as today, and

just as I was getting through unscathed by dint of good judgment and tact, you must come along at the eleventh hour and mar all. Is there such a dearth of inns in Milan that you must blunder right into mine? Or even if you had come alone, that I might have been blind to your folly for this evening and brought you to listen to reason in the morning! But no, sir; you must come to us accompanied, and accompanied by a police agent to boot!"

At every step mine host met with solitary passers-by, or whispering prowlers in pairs or groups. At this particular point in his silent allocution he saw a platoon of soldiers approaching, and, drawing aside to let them pass, he regarded them out of the tail of his eye and continued to commune with himself: "See them now, the scourge-follies. And you are goose enough to fancy that the world is going to change its ways because you have seen a few people gadding about on a rampage. And on this handsome theory you have shipwrecked yourself, and would have shipwrecked me, too—which is not fair. I did my best to save you, and in return you, churl that you are, came near turning my inn topsyturvy. Now save yourself from the toils—I give thought to my own skin. As if I wanted to know your name to satisfy my own curiosity! What is it to me whether you be Thaddeus or Bartholomew? I have no more liking than the next to be driving quills, but then, you are not alone in wanting things your own way. I know as well as you that some edicts be dead-letters—it craved not a mountaineer to come and tell us that much. But what you do not know is that edicts against innkeepers are not dead letters. To set up for a traveler and a talker, and not to know that, to do as one lists and laugh up one's sleeves at edicts, the first requisite is to speak of them very respectfully. And for poor landlords of your way of thinking—those who ask not the names of such as deign to knock at their doors—do you know, churl, what a fine sugar-plum the law has in store? *That each and all of the said landlords, innkeepers and others, as hereinbefore described, be fined three hundred scudi.* As if three hundred *scudi* were to be picked up off the street! And such fine purposes as they are to be put to!

Two-thirds of said fine to be paid into the royal exchequer, and the other third to the prosecutor or informer. Base scavenger! *And, in case of inability to pay, five years in the galleys; said penalties, both pecuniary and corporal, being subject to augmentation at the will of his excellency.* My humblest thanks, indeed!"

At these words the landlord crossed the threshold of the prefecture of police.

There, as at the other administrative offices, the place was all astir. The general attention was occupied with issuing such orders as seemed best calculated to fill up the following day, to deprive promoters of fresh rioting of their pretexts and their daring, and to strengthen the power of those who were accustomed to exercise it. The guard before the director's house received reenforcements. The approaches were barricaded with timber, and breastworks were improvised with wagons. The bakers were ordered to make bread without ceasing. Couriers were despatched to neighboring hamlets with instructions to send grain into the city. At each bake-shop a deputation of nobles was appointed to watch over the distribution of bread from early morning and to restrain all turbulence by the ascendancy of their presence and conciliatory language. But, for the sake of good measure, as we say, and to barb the advice with a little fright, some way was sought of capturing some of the rioters. This task devolved chiefly upon the prefect of police, and we leave the reader to imagine his sentiments towards rioters and rioting, with an arnica compress over one of the organs of his metaphysical convexity.

His bloodhounds had been abroad from the very beginning of the disturbance, and the so-called Ambrogio Fusella was, as mine host has said, a disguised police agent sent out to walk the streets and catch some easily recognizable character red-handed. He was then to mark him for his prey and shadow all his movements, so as to lay him by the heels in the quiet of the night or on the following morning. After hearing a half-dozen words of Renzo's homily, he put him down as just the kind of guileless culprit that was wanted. Then, discovering him to be fresh from

the country, he attempted the master-stroke of leading him straight off to jail, as the safest lodging-house in town; but in this he failed, as we have already seen. He was able, nevertheless, to fetch home with him positive information about his name, surname and birthplace, besides much conjectural information; so that, when the innkeeper arrived to tell what he knew about Renzo, they were already wiser than he. He entered the usual apartment and made his deposition—how a stranger had come to him for lodging, who would not by any manner of means agree to reveal his name.

"You have done your duty in informing the authorities," said a criminal clerk, laying down his pen; "but we already knew as much."

"Great news!" thought mine host. "What wonderful brains!"

"And we know, also," continued the clerk, "his most venerable name."

"The de'il! His name, too! How did they manage it?" the landlord this time thought.

"But you," the other continued, with a serious brow—"you do not tell all frankly."

"What more is there to tell?"

"Hah! We well know that the person in question brought to your inn a quantity of stolen bread—stolen high-handedly, by way of looting and sedition."

"If a man comes in to me with a loaf in his pocket, must I know where he came by it? Because, if I were to die this minute, I saw him have but one loaf."

"Yes, yes; always excusing, always defending. To listen to you, they are all law-abiding. What proof have you that the bread was honestly acquired?"

"What proving have I to do? That is not my trade. I am a landlord."

"Still you cannot deny that this customer of yours had the hardihood to talk scurrilously about edicts and to treat the arms of his excellency with criminal disrespect."

"Under your worship's favor, how can he be my customer, if it is the first time I have seen him? Saving your presence,

'twas the devil sent him to me. And had I known him, your worship sees plainly that I need not have asked his name."

"Still, most astounding things were mentioned in your tavern and in your hearing—dangerous opinions, revolutionary doctrines, mutterings of disaffection, nay, cries, shouts of anarchy."

"How can your worship expect me to lend an ear to the vagaries of a roomful of brawlers all talking at once? I am a poor man and must mind my business. And then, your worship well knows that, where men are so limber with their tongues, they are apt to be no laggards with the fist, especially when they get together; and——"

"Yes, yes, let them talk and do. Tomorrow you shall see whether the mood still holds. What think you?"

"I think nothing."

"That the riffraff have become masters of Milan?"

"Oh, of a certainty."

"You shall see, you shall see."

"I understand very well the king will always be king, but broken bones will still be broken, and a poor father of a family has no desire for such sport. Your worships have the power; it is your concern."

"Are there still many in your inn?"

"A mort of them."

"And your customer—what is he doing? Still wrangling, inciting to rebellion, planning a coil for the morrow?"

"The stranger, your worship would say. He hath gone to bed."

"So you have a mort of people—Enough. See to it that he escapes not."

"Must I play policeman?" thought mine host, but he said neither "Yes" nor "No."

"Now return home, and be discreet," pursued the clerk.

"I am discreet always. Your worship can say whether or not I have ever troubled the law."

"And believe not that the law hath lost its power."

"I? I prithee. I believe nothing. I mind only my inn."

"The old refrain. You have nothing more to tell?"

"What else should I tell? Truth is one."

"Enough. For the nonce we have your deposition. If the need arise, you will then inform the law more fully concerning those matters on which you will be questioned."

"What have I to do with informing? I know nothing. I have barely head enough to attend to my own business."

"See that you do not let him go."

"I hope that his excellency, the prefect of police, will learn that I came at once to fulfil my duty. I kiss your worship's hand."

At daybreak Renzo had already been snoring a good seven hours and was at the soundest of his slumbers, poor lad! when a rude shaking of his shoulders and a voice crying "Lorenzo Tramaglino!" from the foot of his bed aroused him. He awoke, and, releasing his arms and with difficulty opening his eyes, he saw a man in black standing at his feet and two armed men, one at either side of his pillow. Surprise and the lingering stupor of the wine we have seen him drink held him for an instant spell-bound; and, believing himself in a dream, and a disagreeable dream moreover, he began to stretch as if to regain consciousness completely.

"Hah! You have heard at last, Lorenzo Tramaglino?" said he of the black cloak, who was none other than the clerk of last night. "Bestir yourself, therefore. Rise up and come along with us."

"Lorenzo Tramaglino!" quoth Renzo Tramaglino. "What meaneth this? What would you have of me? Who told you my name?"

"Less prating and more speed," said one of the bailiffs at his side, again seizing him by the arm.

"Hallo! What ruffianism is this?" screamed Renzo, liberating his arm. "Landlord! Ho, landlord!"

"Shall we take him off in his shirt-sleeves?" asked the same bailiff, turning to the clerk.

"Do you hear?" said the latter to Renzo. "It shall be done as he says, unless you arise out of hand and come along."

"And wherefore?" inquired Renzo.

"You will learn the wherefore from the prefect of police."

"I? I am a peaceable citizen. I have done naught, and I marvel——"

"So much the better for you. In that case a half-dozen words will clear you and you can go your ways."

"Let me go now," said Renzo. "I have nothing to do with the law."

"Come, come; let us make an end!" said one of the bailiffs.

"Shall we carry him off in good sooth?" asked the other.

"Lorenzo Tramaglino!" said the clerk.

"How did your worship learn my name?"

"To your work," said the clerk to the bailiffs, who forthwith laid hands on Renzo to drag him from bed.

"Hah! Hands off, as I am a decent man. I know how to dress myself."

"Do so, then," said the clerk.

"I shall," replied Renzo, who proceeded to collect the garments which littered the bed, like the wreckage on a seashore. He continued, as he started to don his clothes: "But I will not go before the prefect of police. I have naught to do with him. Since I am affronted thus unjustly, I wish to be taken before Ferrer. Him I know. He is fair-handed, and is beholden to me."

"Be it so, my son; you shall be taken before Ferrer," answered the clerk. Under different circumstances he would have laughed —laughed heartily—at such a request, but this was no time for laughing. On the way hither he had already noted signs of life on the street, which might either be the aftermath of a disturbance but imperfectly quelled, or the beginnings of a new one—people skulking out of dark alleys and mingling together, knots forming at street corners, pedestrians walking in groups. Now, without appearing to do so, or at least, trying not to appear to do so, he was listening intently, and the murmur seemed to be swelling. He desired, therefore, to speed matters, but he would also fain get Renzo away with his own concurrence; because, if it came to open warfare, he could not be sure the odds would remain three to one. So he winked at his myrmidons

to have patience and not exasperate the youth, while, on his side, he sought to conciliate him by fair speaking.

Meanwhile the youth himself, mentally rehearsing the events of yesterday as best he might, as he went on dressing with the greatest leisure, guessed that it all grew out of edicts, and names and surnames. But how the deuce did this man know his name? And what the deuce had happened during the night, that the authorities had assurance enough to come triumphantly and lay hands upon one of those same hearts-of-oak who the day before had so much voice in council?—and who, by the same token, could not all have received their quietus, since Renzo, in his turn also, became aware of the increasing rumble in the street. Glancing up at the clerk's face, he descried there faintly the hesitancy which the other struggled in vain to dissemble. Therefore, to get some light on his conjectures and take his bearings, as well as to gain time and also make a move for liberty, he said: "I see well what is back of all this. It is all along of names and surnames. I was a trifle merry last evening, 'tis true. There is treachery in these wines which landlords at times serve you, and sometimes, as I say, it is not the man, but the wine inside him, which doth the talking. But if that be all, I am ready now to make all amends. And after all, you already know my name. Who the de'il told it to you?"

"Well spoken, son, well spoken!" said the clerk in his best manner. "I see that you are a man of judgment; and believe me, who am of the profession, that you have more than your share of shrewdness. 'Tis the best way to come off well and quickly. With such good dispositions you will be quits and at liberty again in two words. But see you, my son, my hands are tied. I cannot release you here, as you wish. Come, use haste, and accompany us fearlessly. When they see who you are— And then, I shall put in a word— Leave all to me— Enough; bestir yourself, son."

"Ah! You cannot release me, I see," said Renzo, continuing to don his clothes and waving aside the bailiffs who made as if to assist him.

"Shall we pass in front of the cathedral?" he inquired of the clerk.

"Where you will. The shortest way, so you are free the sooner," said the latter, cursing inwardly that he had to let Renzo's mysterious query go by the board, when it might be made the text for a hundred cross-questions. "I was born unlucky," he thought. "Here is a bird in the hand who wants nothing better than to sing. Given just a little leisure he could be made to confess whatever one chose, thus *extra formam,* over our wine, as it were, by way of friendly conversation, without any thumbscrews—a man to lead into prison already tried without his perceiving it. And a man of this sort crosseth my path at such a trying moment as the present. Heigho! there is no help for it," he went on musing, as he turned his head around and strained his ears, "there is no help for it. Today bids fair to be worse than yesterday."

The occasion of this reflection was an extraordinarily loud noise which he heard in the street. He could not refrain from opening the window and glancing out. There he saw a group of citizens, who, upon being enjoined to disband by a cordon of soldiers, replied at first by insulting words and at length grumblingly separated. What struck the clerk as a fatal sign was that the soldiers were all civility. He closed the window and remained for a moment deliberating whether to see the undertaking through or to leave Renzo in the custody of the two police and hasten to the prefect to report what had happened. "But," he reflected forthwith, "I shall be told that I am a good-for-nothing, a mollycoddle, and that I ought to have followed my orders. Well, the music hath begun, and we must dance. A vengeance seize them! A murrain on such an office!"

Renzo had arisen, flanked by a satellite at either side. The clerk motioned to them not to use too much constraint, and to Renzo, "That's a good fellow," he said, "come along, quick."

Renzo's ears, eyes and thoughts were busy, too. He was now entirely dressed save for his doublet, which he held in one hand while he rummaged with the other through the pockets. "Hallo!"

he said, casting a meaning look at the clerk. "There were some coppers here and a letter, worshipful sir."

"You will get all punctually," said the clerk, "as soon as those few formalities have been gone through with. Come, let us hence."

"No, no, no," said Renzo, shaking his head. "That goeth not. I want my gear, worshipful sir. I shall give an account of my deeds, but I want my gear."

"I would fain show I trust you. Here, and make haste," said the clerk, taking the confiscated articles from his bosom and consigning them with a sigh to Renzo, who restored them to their place, muttering between his teeth as he did so: "Out upon you! you consort with thieves so much that you have learned something of their trade."

The bailiffs could hardly control themselves, but the clerk held them in check by a look, saying meanwhile in his heart: "If I ever get you across the threshold, you'll pay me for this—pay me with usury."

As Renzo was donning his doublet and picking up his hat, the clerk beckoned to one of his assistants to start downstairs. He sent the prisoner on after, then the other assistant, and himself brought up the rear. In the kitchen, while Renzo was inquiring where that rogue of a landlord had stowed himself, the clerk gave another signal to the bailiffs, who grasped the youth, one by the right arm, the other by the left, and with the greatest possible haste slipped on his wrists certain instruments, called with euphemistic cant "handcuffs."

These latter consisted (we regret that we must descend to details unworthy of serious history; but perspicuity requires it) —they consisted of a thong something longer than the girth of the average wrist, terminating in two wooden shanks. The thong encircled the wrist of the captive; the wooden appurtenances, introduced between the middle and ring finger of the user, remained grasped in his closed fist in such fashion that he could at pleasure increase the pressure by twisting. This expedient furnished the means not only of securing the arrest, but also of inflicting punishment upon the person of the prisoner, if he

proved refractory. Knots tied in the thong heightened their efficacy in this direction.

Renzo struggled to free himself, screaming: "What perfidy is this—practiced on an honest man?" But the clerk, who always kept a just proportion between the kindness of the word and the rudeness of the deed, said: "You must be patient; 'tis their duty. What would you have us do? They are all prescribed formalities. We cannot treat people according to the dictates of our heart. If we did, we too would pay the forfeit—worse than you. Have patience."

As he was speaking, the two functionaries gave the wooden pegs a twist. Renzo quieted down, like an unruly horse that feels the twitch cutting into his lip, and ejaculated: "Patience!"

"Well spoken, my son," quoth the clerk. " 'Tis the best way out. What would you? 'Tis irksome, I know, but with good deportment you will have it over in a twinkling. And, since I see you so well disposed and I find myself minded to do you a good turn, I would give you another piece of advice for your own weal. Take my word for it, who am one of the profession—go straight ahead, without looking right or left and without attracting notice. Thus none will heed you or observe your case, and your good name is untarnished. In an hour you will again be free (there is so much to do, they themselves will be eager to despatch your case. And then, I, too, will put in a word). Away you go about your business, and none to know that you have been in the hands of justice. And look you," he continued, turning to the guards with a severe eye, "that you do him no hurt, for he is under my protection. Your duty, yes, but bear in mind that he is an honest man—an estimable youth—who will shortly have his liberty, and his good name concerneth him dearly. Proceed in such wise that no one's attention is aroused, as if you were three respectable citizens out for a walk." Then, with a frown and a tone of authority, he concluded: "You have heard." Turning next to Renzo, with an unwrinkled brow and a countenance suddenly wreathed in smiles, as who should say: Oh, what friends we are! he again whispered: "Be wise. Do as

I say; go along quietly and collectedly; trust one who wishes you well. Come." The convoy then set out.

Now, of all these fine words Renzo believed not one; neither that the clerk liked him better than he did his subalterns, nor that his reputation was so dear to him, nor that he intended to help him. He understood perfectly that the good man, fearing lest an opportunity of escape should present itself on the street, was setting forth these brave motives to dissuade him from watching for such a chance and seizing it. So it befell that all these exhortations served no other purpose than to strengthen the resolution Renzo already entertained of doing the precise contrary.

Let no one infer from this that the clerk was a green, unsophisticated trickster; because he would be mistaken. He was a past-master in trickery, says our historian, who appears to have been numbered among his friends, but at the time he was excited. In his cooler moments he would have poked fun, I can tell you, at any one who would essay to lead another into a course already suspect by proposing it to his intended victim and recommending it in good earnest under the miserable pretext of giving disinterested advice as friend to friend. But there is a tendency, when men are excited and in straits and they see how another could rescue them from their perplexity, to beg such service with urgency and insistence and under every kind of pretence; and, when tricksters are excited and in straits, they, too, follow the general law. Hence it is that in such circumstances they present so sorry a figure.

One wonders if these are the recognized masters of chicane, who are so used to triumphing with the fine strategy which has become almost a second nature, and which, if employed at the proper time and exercised with the necessary calmness of mind and clearness of head, achieves the desired end so perfectly, and withal, so secretly and wins the general applause when at last the public learns of the successful issue. Because, when the poor dear men are in extremities, they ply their tactics like imbeciles, in haste and without tact or suavity. Thus they excite the pity and laughter of those who see them racking and cudgelling their

brains, and the victim whom they would enmesh at such a moment, though not so shrewd as they, sees clearly through their manœuvring and turns their ruses against the authors into clues for his own guidance. Therefore it can never be sufficiently insisted upon that professional tricksters should always keep a cool head, or else keep the upper hand—which is even safer.

No sooner, then, had they set foot in the street, than Renzo began to look about on all sides, at the same time straining his ears and sticking out his head. But there were no crowds and, though one might easily have traced an indefinable air of mutiny on the countenance of more than one passer-by, still each kept straight on his way, and all rebelliousness, properly so-called, was lacking.

"Be sensible, be sensible," whispered the clerk behind his back; "your good name, my son, your good name." But when Renzo, watching intently a trio that were approaching, their faces inflamed with excitement, heard them speak of bake-shops, of hidden grain and of getting justice, he went further and began to make them signs with his face and to cough after a fashion that indicates anything but a cold. They regarded the convoy more attentively and came to a stand. Others, arriving on the scene, stood with them, and still others, who had passed on, turned at the sound of whispering and came back, bringing up the rear.

"Heed yourself, my son. Be sensible. 'Twill be worse for you, remember. Mar not your cause. Your fair name! Your reputation!" the clerk continued to whisper. Renzo behaved worse. His guards, after exchanging consultatory glances, thinking they were doing the right thing (everyone is liable to err), gave the gyves a twist.

"Ouch! ouch! ouch!" screamed their victim. The people flocked to the sound. Accessions arrived from every part of the street, and the convoy found itself blocked by the crowd. "He is a bad character," the clerk murmured to those who beset him —"a thief caught red-handed. Fall back, your worships; let the law's representatives pass." But Renzo, seeing the psychological moment arrive, and noting that the bailiffs turned white—or pale,

at least, "Unless I help myself here," he thought, "I lose." So, raising his voice, "Comrades," he said, "they are taking me to prison for that yesterday I cried 'Bread and justice.' I have done no wrong; I am an honest citizen. Help me, comrades; don't abandon me."

A favorable murmur arose in reply, intimations of protection became clearer. From commanding, the bailiffs took to requesting, then to beseeching those nearest them to move off and make room. Instead, the pushing and crushing increased each minute. Seeing the evil plight that threatened, Renzo's guards let go the gyves and were preoccupied thenceforward only with effacing themselves in the throng and thus escaping unobserved. The clerk desired fervently to do the same, but he was beset with woes on account of his black cloak. The poor man, pale and terror-stricken, sought to shrink into insignificance. He wriggled and writhed, trying to squeeze his way out of the press; but, if he raised his head, twenty eyes were upon him. He used all his art to appear a stranger, who, passing that way by chance, had become pilloried in the throng, like a straw in ice; and, brought face to face with one who regarded him intently and frowned worse than the rest, composing his features to a smile, with a fatuous air he inquired: "What hath befallen?"

"Ugh, carrion-crow!" replied the other. "Carrion-crow! carrion-crow!" echoed all around. Yelling was followed up by shoving, so that in a brief space of time, thanks partly to his own two legs and partly to the elbows of his neighbors, he obtained the wish which at that moment lay nearest his heart, that is, to be out of that welter.

Chapter XVI

"Fly, fly, worthy youth! Here is a monastery! There is a church! This way! that way!" were the cries that greeted Renzo on every side. As to making his escape, it may be imagined whether he needed advice. From the first moment that the hope of freeing himself from his captors' clutches had flashed through his mind he had begun to make his calculations, and had determined, if he were successful in this, to continue on without stopping until he was outside, not only of the city, but of the duchy as well. "Because," he reflected, "they have my name on their dockets, however they came by it, and, with my name and surname in their possession, they will come and get me when they list." As for sanctuaries, he would have confined himself in one only if the police were actually at his heels. "Because," he reflected in turn, "I'll be no cage-bird, if I can remain a bird of the forest."

He had, therefore, designed to take refuge in the province of Bergamo, where his cousin Bortolo—the same who, if you remember, had more than once invited him to come thither—was established. But to find the road, there was the rub. Left to himself in an unknown quarter of what we might call an unknown city, Renzo was even ignorant which gate led out to Bergamo; and, had he known which it was, he would still have been at a loss how to reach it. He was on the point of asking one of his liberators to direct him; but, inasmuch as in the brief interval which he had had to meditate upon his adventures, certain thoughts had suggested themselves in regard to that very obliging armorer, the father of four children, he had cause now to be loath to advertise his intentions before a large gathering, which might contain another of the same stamp. And so he quickly resolved to hurry away from that neighborhood and ask his way when none would be by to know him or his reasons for asking.

"Many thanks, comrades. God bless you," he said to his rescuers. Then, going out through an exit which was immediately opened up for him, he took to his heels and away, running up an alley and down a narrow street without knowing whither he was going. When he was, as he thought, far enough away, he moderated his pace so as not to excite suspicion and began to look about for the person whom he would choose as his informant—some face that inspired confidence. But here again there were difficulties. The question was a suspicious one in itself. Time pressed. The police would, without doubt, again be on the trail of their fugitive as soon as they were clear of this slight obstruction. The news of his flight might have spread thus far. And under such perplexing circumstances Renzo had to make perhaps ten physiognomical judgments before finding a countenance which seemed to suit. That fat man standing yonder at the door of his shop, with legs wide apart, hands folded behind and protruding paunch, his chin in the air with a great wattle of blubber beneath it, and who, for the want of something else to do, was alternately lifting his gelatinous mass on the tips of his toes and letting it fall back on his heels, had the face of an inquisitive gossip, who, instead of giving an answer, would have put questions himself. That other, who was approaching with eyes riveted ahead and lip hanging down, seemed so far from being able to point out the way to another with promptness and accuracy, that he appeared hardly to know his own. This stripling here, who, to speak truth, gave signs of being sharp enough, gave signs also of being still more mischievous, and he probably would have taken an insane delight in sending a poor countryman in the opposite direction to that in which he wanted to go. So true is it that to the man in difficulties everything is a fresh difficulty! At length, seeing some one coming along in haste, he reflected that such a one, probably having some urgent business of his own, would answer him outright without prattling; and, hearing him talking to himself, he judged that he must be honest. He approached him and said: "By your leave, good sir, which way does one go to reach Bergamo?"

"Bergamo? By the East Gate."

"Gramercy! And to get to the East Gate?"

"Take this street to the right. You will find yourself on the cathedral-square. Then——"

"It is enough; I know the rest. God reward you." And he set out at once in the direction indicated. The other looked after him for an instant and, putting together the inquiry with the gait, "Either he hath served some one else," he said to himself, "or some one wants to serve him."

Renzo reached the cathedral-square and crossed it, passing by a heap of ashes and extinct embers, in which he recognized the remains of the blaze which he had witnessed the day before. He skirts the cathedral steps, reviews the Bakery *delle Grucce,* half-dismantled and guarded by soldiers, and pushes on up the street by which he had arrived along with the populace. Now he is at the Capuchin monastery, and, giving a glance at the church-gate and the esplanade in front of it, " 'Twas good advice, just the same," he mused as he sighed, "that the friar gave me yesterday to wait in the church and do a little good to my soul."

Here, having paused an instant to survey attentively the gate through which he was to pass, and seeing from this distance a large number of persons on the watch, his imagination being somewhat heated (let us pity him—he had his reasons), a certain repugnance to taking this step assailed him. A place of sanctuary so close at hand and a good recommendation in his pocket—he was strongly tempted to enter. But, plucking up courage forthwith, "A bird of the forest," he thought, "as long as may be. Who knoweth me here? Surely the police cannot multiply themselves, to be waiting for me at every gate." He turned to see if they might not be approaching; but neither they nor any one else seemed to concern themselves about him. He started forward, reining in those precious legs of his which were for running perpetually when their cue was to walk, and, sauntering along, whistling half to himself, he arrived at the gate.

A group of tax-gatherers, with a reenforcement of Spanish halberdiers, were right at the entrance, but all their attention

was directed towards the outside, to prevent the entrance of that element which always gathers at the news of an uprising, like crows after a battle; so that Renzo, wearing an air of indifference, his eyes fixed on the ground and his gait suggesting something between a traveler and a man out for a stroll, passed by without any one's saying a word to him. But his heart beat furiously. Seeing a lane running off to his right, he turned into it to avoid the highway, and did not even look behind him until he had walked some distance ahead.

On and on he walked, coming across granges and villages, and pushing forward without even asking the names of them. He was certain of leaving Milan farther behind, and he hoped he might be going towards Bergamo; and that sufficed for the nonce. From time to time he turned to look back. From time to time, also, he would look at one wrist after the other and chafe them, for they were still somewhat numb and bore the bright-red impress of the handcuffs around them. His mind, as any one may imagine, was a jumble of regrets and anxieties, of tenderness and rage, as he wearied himself with piecing together the things he had said and done the evening before to discover the unknown chapter of his painful story, and above all to solve how they had learned his name.

His suspicions naturally fell on the armorer, to whom he remembered well to have blabbed it. And, as he thought over the way in which the other had extorted it, and his general manner, and all his tenders leading up to something he wished to know, suspicion became almost a certainty. Almost—because he remembered vaguely to have chattered on after the armorer's departure; with whom, blessed if he knew; and on what subject, his memory for all his catechising could return no answer. The only fact it was able to report was its own truancy during the time in question. The poor fellow lost himself in the maze. He was like a man who has put his signature to a number of blank leaves and entrusted them to a paragon of honesty (as he thought), whom he discovers later to be a scheming rogue. He would then fain learn how his affairs stand; but how make head or tail of such a chaos? Another distressing preoccupation was

that of planning a future to suit his taste. Those prospects which were not visionary were all melancholy.

But very shortly his most distressing preoccupation became that of finding the road. After having walked for a stretch at random, as one might say, he perceived that, of himself, he could not make his way. He felt a certain repugnance, it is true, to pronounce the word "Bergamo," on account of the suspicion and shame it seemed to connote; but there was nothing else to do. He decided, therefore, to address himself, as he had done in Milan, to the first wayfarer whose countenance appealed to his fancy. And so he did.

"You are off the road," replied his interlocutor; and, pausing a moment to think, he described, partly by words, partly by signs, the detours he must make to regain the highroad. Renzo thanked him and made as if to follow his prescriptions. He bent his steps, in fact, in that direction, with the intention of getting close to that tantalizing thoroughfare, of keeping it in view, of skirting along it as far as possible, but without actually setting foot on it. This plan was easier to conceive than to execute. The upshot was that, by reason of tacking thus from right to left on what we call a zig-zag course, partly following the directions which he plucked up courage to angle for here and there and correcting them according to his own lights and adapting them to his own ends, partly letting the road on which he chanced to be determine his path, our fugitive walked perhaps twelve miles before getting more than six from Milan; and, as for Bergamo, it was much if he was not farther away from it than at the start. He began to be persuaded that even this way of doing was not taking him ahead, and cast about for some other device. That which occurred to him was to discover by some subtlety the name of a village near the frontier which could be reached by the main road, and to learn his way by asking for that, instead of letting fall every now and then that inquiry about Bergamo, which seemed to him to smack so strongly of flight, of banishment and criminality.

While he was pondering a way to wheedle out all this information without exciting suspicion, he saw a bush hanging over the

door of a solitary cottage on the outside of a certain hamlet. He had for some time been sensible of still another need, that of replenishing his strength, and, reflecting that here would be the place to kill two birds with one stone, he went in. No one was at home but an old beldame with the distaff at her side and the spindle between her fingers. He bespoke a bite to eat. Some *stracchino* and good wine were offered in reply. He accepted the *stracchino,* but thankfully declined the wine (it had become hateful since the trick it had played him the preceding evening), and, sitting down, he besought the woman to use despatch. She had the viands on the table in an instant, and all at once began to ply her guest with questions about himself and the great happenings in Milan, the rumors of them having traveled this far. Renzo was able not only to parry her inquiries with much simplicity of manner, but when the old woman asked him whither he was bound, he made capital of her curiosity, thus drawing profit from his very difficulties.

"I must go many places," he replied; "and if I find time, I would pass a few moments in that village which lieth near the border—but in the Duchy of Milan—on the way to Bergamo—A middling large village. What is this it is called? (There must be some such place)," he thought meantime to himself.

"Gorgonzola, you would say," answered the beldame.

"Gorgonzola!" repeated Renzo, as if to make the word sink into his brain. "Is it far from here?" he resumed.

"I do not know exactly. Maybe ten, maybe twelve miles. If one of my sons were here, he could tell you."

"And do you think one could go thither by these lovely lanes, instead of taking the highway? It is so dusty, so frightfully dusty. No rain for such an age."

"My belief is you can. You may inquire at the first village you will find on turning to the right," calling it by name.

"Very good," quoth Renzo; and, rising from the table, he took with him a piece of bread that remained from his meagre repast —bread very different from that which he had found the day before at the foot of St. Dennis's Cross. He then paid his reckoning and started off to the right, and (not to be tedious), with the

name of Gorgonzola on his lips as he went from village to village, he reached there an hour before nightfall.

He had planned, even as he journeyed along, to make another brief stop at this point for the purpose of regaling himself somewhat more substantially. His body would have craved also a little repose, but, rather than humor it in this, Renzo would have let it drop exhausted on the road. His purpose was to inform himself at the inn of the distance to the Adda, adroitly glean some intelligence of a short-cut that led to it, and set off at once in that direction as soon as he had finished his refreshment.

Born and raised at the second source (so to speak) of that river, he had often heard tell that, at a certain point in its course and for some distance beyond, it formed the boundary between the provinces of Milan and Venice. Of the location of that point and the extent of the distance he had no well-defined conception, but, as matters then stood, his most pressing concern was to get across it wherever he might. If he did not compass his project that day, he was resolved to walk on as long as the night and his strength would allow, and then wait for daybreak in a field, a wilderness—wherever Heaven pleased to decree, so long as it was not an inn.

After proceeding a few paces in Gorgonzola, he saw the sign of a hostelry, and entered. The landlord coming up, he asked him for a few mouthfuls to eat and a small measure of wine, —time and the extra miles had banished his fanatical and excessive hatred of it. "Make haste, I prithee," he added; "because I must be on my way again without delay." This he said, not only because it was the truth, but also for fear that mine host, imagining he might want to sleep there, would open up with questions concerning his name and surname, and whence he came, and on what business, and—The Lord preserve us!

The landlord promised compliance, and Renzo took his seat at the lower end of the table near the door, the usual place of the bashful.

There were in the room some idlers of the village who, after having discussed and commented upon the great news from Milan of the day before, were dying to know something of that day's

developments; the more so as those first reports were better calculated to stimulate curiosity than allay it—an uprising that was neither subdued nor victorious, interrupted rather than terminated by the advent of night—an unfulfilled promise—the end of an act rather than of a play. One of their number detached himself from the group, and, approaching the newcomer, inquired whether he came from Milan.

"I?" quoth Renzo in surprise, to gain time for an answer.

"You, if the question be permissible."

Renzo shook his head, at the same time uttering inarticulate sounds behind tightly pursed lips. "Milan," he then said, "from what I hear, is no place to go a-visiting at this moment, unless there be great necessity."

"The pother, then, continueth today too?" inquired the other, whose curiosity was becoming more insistent.

"It needs to have been there to know," said Renzo.

"But you—come you not from Milan?"

"I come from Liscate," promptly answered the youth, who meanwhile had thought of a reply. He did come from there in literal truth, since he had passed through it, and he had learned its name at a certain point of the road from a wayfarer, who indicated the village as the first he must traverse to reach Gorgonzola.

"Oh!" said the crony, as though he meant: Milan would suit better, but peace! "And at Liscate," he subjoined, "did they know nothing about Milan?"

"It may very well be that some one there knew," replied the mountaineer; "but I heard nothing." And this he said in that peculiar tone which seems to imply that one has done. His inquisitor went away, and soon the landlord came to lay the cloth.

"How far is the Adda from here?" inquired Renzo, assuming an air of drowsiness and mumbling the words, as we saw him do on another occasion.

"The Adda? To cross it?" returned the landlord.

"That is—Yes—the Adda."

"Do you want to cross by the Cassano bridge or on the ferry at Canonica?"

"Anywhere. I ask out of curiosity."

"Hm! I meant, because those are the places where honest folk go across—such as can give an account of themselves."

"Well. And how far is it?"

"You might say that, one way or the other, it would be close to six miles."

"Six miles! I thought it not so far," said Renzo. "And then," he continued with an air of indifference carried to the point of affectation, "supposing one had to take a short-cut, are there other places of crossing?"

"There are, without doubt," replied the landlord, fixing on him a pair of eyes full of malicious curiosity. This sufficed to stifle the other inquiries which the youth had on his tongue to make. He pulled the plate towards him, and, looking at the small measure of wine which the landlord had placed beside it, "Is it pure?" he said.

"As gold," said mine host. "Ask any one of the village or country-side, where its merits are known. Besides, you can taste it for yourself." So saying, he returned to the company.

"An apoplexy seize all landlords!" said Renzo to himself. "The more I know, the worse they become."

None the less he set to eating with a vigorous appetite, straining his ears at the same time, without appearing to do so, trying to get his bearings, to discover what people thought of the great event in which he had taken no small part, and especially, to ascertain whether, among the speakers, there were some honest wight whom a luckless lad might trust to ask his way without being put to book and made to rehearse his private affairs.

"By my troth," one of them was saying, "but it looks as if this time the Milanese meant business. Let be. Tomorrow at the latest we shall know something."

"I regret that I did not go to Milan this morning," said another.

"If you go tomorrow, I shall go along," said a third. "And I," said a fourth. "And I," said a fifth.

"What I would fain learn," resumed the first, "is whether their worships of Milan will think of poor country-folk, or whether

they will make good laws only for themselves. You know what they are, eh! Proud burghers. Everything for themselves, and never a thought for others."

"We have mouths of our own, be it to eat or to say our say," said another, the modesty of whose tone contrasted with the audacity of his proposal; "and if the ball hath been set rolling—" But he thought it better to leave his sentence unfinished.

"There be hidden grain in more places than Milan," another was beginning with an air of darkness and malevolence, when a horse was heard approaching. All ran to the door, and, recognizing the traveler, went out to meet him. It was a merchant of Milan, who, having business which took him to Bergamo several times a year, was wont to pass the night in this particular inn; and, since he almost invariably found there the same company, he knew them all. They crowded about him, therefore, one holding the stirrups for him, while another held the bridle. "Well met, well met!"

"Well met!" responded he.

"Hast had a pleasant journey?"

"Never pleasanter. And how do you fare, yourselves?"

"Well, well, well. What news dost thou bear from Milan?"

"Hah! How curious folk be," said the merchant in the act of dismounting and leaving his steed in the hands of a hostler. "Besides," he continued, on his way in with the others, "by this time you know maybe more than I."

"We know naught, by our troth," said several, with their hands on their breasts.

"Can it be?" quoth the merchant. "Then you shall have jolly news—or ill news, rather. Ho, landlord! Is my accustomed bed unoccupied? Good. A glass of wine and my usual bit to eat at once, because I wish to go to bed betimes, to get an early start tomorrow morning and reach Bergamo for dinner. And so," he continued, preparing to take his seat opposite to where Renzo was stationed, silent and attentive, "you know nothing of all yesterday's deviltries?"

"Yesterday's, aye."

"See now," resumed the merchant, "whether you know not the

news. As I said, being here always on the watch and sifting passers-by——"

"But today—what befell today?"

"Ah, today! You know nothing of today?"

"Nothing at all. No one hath passed."

"Then let me first wet my lips, and I'll tell you of today's doings. You shall hear." He filled his glass and took it in his hand. Then, raising up the ends of his moustaches with the first two fingers of the other and sleeking his beard, he drank and resumed: "Today, my dear friends, came near being as stormy as yesterday, or even stormier. It doth not seem real to be here chatting with you, for I had already put aside all thought of travel to stay and watch my poor shop."

"What the foul fiend was the trouble?" said one of his hearers.

"Verily, the foul fiend himself. You shall hear." And, as he carved and then ate the portion which had been placed before him, he continued his narrative. The company, standing on either side of the table, listened open-mouthed. Renzo, without appearing to be interested, gave an attentive ear, perhaps more attentive than any, from his place at the foot of the table, meanwhile masticating his last mouthful with consummate slowness.

"This morning, then, those same blackguards who raised such a frightful pandemonium yesterday met at the place designated —because there was an understanding among them—every detail arranged. They came together and began their antics all over again, gallivanting from street to street and making a hullabaloo to attract others. You know what happens when the house is swept out (saving your presence); the filth piles higher the farther you go. When their numbers seemed sufficient, they set out for the director of supplies—as if their outrages of the day before had not been enough—the scoundrels!—and a nobleman of his sort! Oh! the scoundrels! And the things they charged him withal! All made of the whole cloth! An estimable noble and scrupulous, as I can avouch, who am familiar with him and furnish cloth for his servants' liveries. Off they started, therefore, for his house, and one must needs have seen what a scurvy, sorry-looking pack they were! Just fancy! they passed in front

of my shop. Sorry-looking? The Jews of the Via Crucis are nothing to them. And their ribaldry! Enough to make one stop his ears, were it not amiss to attract their attention. On they went, therefore, fully bent on looting. But"—And here he thrust his tongue into his cheek.

"But?" echoed maybe every one of his hearers.

"But," went on the merchant, "they found the street barred with timber and carts, and behind this barricade a handsome file of fusiliers with their harquebuses leveled to receive them as they deserved. Seeing this fine reception—What would you have done, yourselves?"

"Turned back."

"To be sure; and so did they. But see you now if 'twas not the devil that drove them. In the Cordusio they saw the bake-shop which they had wanted to loot since the day before. And what were they doing inside? Distributing bread to purchasers. The nobility, and the cream of the nobility, too! were watching that all went well, when those ruffians (they were possessed by a demon, I tell you, and besides, they had their whippers-in) rushed in like mad-men, and an indiscriminate pillage ensued. In the twinkling of an eye everything was topsyturvy—nobility, bakers, buyers, bread, counter, benches, kneading-troughs, bins, sacks, sieves, bran, flour, dough—all scattered higgledy-piggledy."

"And the fusiliers?"

"The fusiliers had the director's house to guard. You can't sing and whistle at one time. It was all in the twinkling of an eye, I tell you. Snatch fingers, grab hand; and all that was worth anything had been taken. Then yesterday's merry conceit of carrying the remnants to the square and making a bonfire of them was again suggested, and the reprobates were already beginning to lug out articles, when guess what the greatest reprobate of them all came out and proposed."

"What?"

"To heap up everything in the shop and set fire to heap and shop together. No sooner said than done——"

"They set fire to it?"

"Hold. An honest man of the neighborhood had an inspira-

tion from Heaven. He ran upstairs for a crucifix, and finding one, attached it to the window-sash. Then taking two blessed candles from the head of the bed, he placed them on either side of the crucifix. The people look up. There is still a Milan with the fear of God in it, I must admit, for the whole crowd came to its senses—the greater number, I should say, because there were some demons of them who would have set fire to paradise itself for loot. But, seeing that the populace was not of their mind, they were fain to desist and remain quiet. Come all the canons of the cathedral in procession, vested for choir with the cross borne ahead. Monsignore Mazenta, the archpriest, starts preaching in one place, Monsignore Settala, the penitentiary, in another, and the rest in their turn:—'How is this, good people; what would you do? And is this an example to set your children? Come, return to your homes. Why, know you not that bread is cheap again—cheaper than before? Go see for yourselves; the notice is posted at the corners.'"

"Was it true?"

"What a pox! Would the canons of the cathedral come in *cappa magna* to humbug?"

"And what did the populace?"

"Little by little they went their ways and hurried to the corners of the street, and there was the schedule of prices for those who could read. Fancy, an eight-ounce loaf for a *soldo!*"

"What prosperity!"

"True; if the goose were not killed that laid the golden eggs. Know you how much flour hath gone to waste between yesterday and this morning? Enough to serve the duchy for two months."

"And have no good laws been made for those outside the city?"

"What hath been done for Milan is all at the city's expense. For yourselves I know not what will betide. God's will be done! Happily the turbulence is over. But I have not told all. Now cometh the real treat."

"What else?"

"Only this: that last night, or this morning, as the case may be, many were arrested, and at once it was learned that the leaders are to be hanged. Hardly had this rumor begun to spread,

when every one took the shortest cut home, so as not to risk being in the number. When I left it, Milan seemed a monastery of friars."

"Will they hang them, in sooth?"

"Higher than Aman! and that soon," replied the merchant.

"And the populace? what will they do?" persisted he who had made the first inquiry.

"The populace? They will go to see the hanging," quoth the merchant. "They were so eager to see a Christian man dance on air that the scoundrels would have served the noble director of supplies. In his stead they shall have four runagates, treated with all due formalities and accompanied by Capuchins and the Confraternity of a Happy Death—and four who get their just dues. It is a dispensation of Providence, see you—it was become necessary. They had already taken the notion into their heads of going into shops and helping themselves without paying a cross. If they were let go, wine would come after bread, and so by degrees—You may think whether they would have desisted of their own free wills from practices so convenient. And I can tell you on my own account that for an honest merchant with a shop open to the public the prospect was not a merry one."

"No, in troth," quoth one of the listeners. "No, in troth," repeated the others in chorus.

"And," continued the mercer, wiping his beard with the cloth, "it was all planned in the past. There was a plot; you knew?"

"A plot?"

"A plot. All an intrigue set on foot by the Navarrines, by that French cardinal—him with the Turkish-sounding name—You know whom I mean—that hatches out something new each day to spite the Spanish crown. But, above all, doth he aim to strike a blow in Milan, because he seeth clearly, the knave, that it is the stronghold of the king."

"True."

"Do you want a proof? The greatest disturbers were strangers. Wandering about the streets were characters who had never before been seen in Milan. Stay! I was forgetting to tell

you of an episode which was told me for certain truth. The law had laid hands on some man in a tavern—" Renzo, who was not losing an *iota* of the whole discourse, felt his blood run cold when this chord was touched and gave a start before he could think of controlling himself. No one perceived his movement, and the speaker, without breaking the thread of his narrative, pursued:—"some man, of whom it is not well known whence he came, by whom he was sent or what his sort; but of a certainty he was one of the ringleaders. Yesterday at the height of the uproar he had already raised the de'il, and, not content with this, he proceeded to make harangues and proposed the gallant idea of murdering all the nobility. The scoundrel! How would poor folk live if the nobility were killed? The police, who had marked him, laid him by the heels and found a packet of letters on his person. They were leading him to jail, when, behold you! his confederates, who had been patrolling around the tavern, came in force and set him free—the villain."

"And what came of it?"

" 'Tis not known. He either escaped or is in hiding in Milan. Such persons have neither house nor home, but they are nowhere without lairs to give them lodging—still, only so long as the devil can, or will, help them. They fall into the toils when they least expect it, because, when the pear is ripe, it must needs drop. For the nonce, 'tis known for sure that the letters remained in the hands of the police and that the whole plot is described therein. Many will smoke for it, they say. Well, so much the worse for them. They turned half Milan topsy-turvy, and would have gone further. The bakers are rascals, they tell us. I know; but let them be hanged by due process of law. There is grain hidden. Who doth not know so much? But it is for the authorities to maintain good espionage, then go unearth it, and afterwards set the monopolists a-swinging in company with the bakers. And, if the authorities do naught, let the city ask redress. If they pay no heed the first time, let it ask again, because by dint of asking is redress obtained. But let not this infamous practice take root of entering our stores and mercer-shops and pillaging our wares before our very eyes."

Renzo's meagre meal had now turned to poison within him. He seemed to be a thousand years in getting well out of that inn and hamlet, and for more than the tenth time he bade himself be gone. But that old fear of exciting suspicion, magnified now out of all proportion and tyrannizing over every thought, had kept him glued to the bench. In his perplexity he reflected that this great gabbler must eventually have done talking about him, and he decided within himself to start off as soon as he heard him broach some other topic.

"And that is why," said one of the group, "knowing how such matters turn out, and that honest citizens fare ill in popular tumults, I would not let myself be swayed by curiosity, but remained within my own doors."

"And I," quoth another; "did I ever budge a step?"

"And I," subjoined a third, "if I found myself by chance in Milan, would have returned home out of hand, leaving any business I had, unfinished. I have a wife and family. Besides, to speak truth, such orgies are not to my liking."

At this point, mine host, who had also stood listening, went to the other end of the table to see what the stranger was doing. Renzo seized the opportunity. Beckoning the landlord to him, he asked for his score, and paid it without waiting for change, though his purse was very lean. Then, without more words, he crossed the threshold, and, taking Providence for his guide, he fared forth in the opposite direction to that from which he had come.

Chapter XVII

One engrossing desire is often sufficient to rob a man of peace of soul; what then of two, driving him in opposite directions? Poor Renzo, as the reader is aware, had now for many hours been preyed upon by two such desires, one urging him to run, the other to stay in hiding; and the mercer's ominous words had increased unconscionably both the one and the other at a stroke. His adventure had made a stir, then! So they wanted him at any cost! Heaven knew how many police were abroad in his pursuit and what instructions had been despatched to ransack inns, villages and thoroughfares! True, he reflected, that, in the last analysis, there were but two police who knew him, and that he did not bear his name written on his forehead; but then, certain tales he had heard ran through his mind, of fugitives who had been detected and taken through strange coincidences—recognized by their gait, their suspicious demeanor, or other unconscious tokens. Everything was a cause of alarm.

Although the clock was on the stroke of twenty-four[1] as he left Gorgonzola and the oncoming darkness made such perils every moment less, still it was with reluctance that he took the highway, and he resolved to turn into the first byroad that seemed likely to bring him to the point he was anxious to reach. At first he encountered an occasional passer-by, but, filled as was

[1] [According to the old Italian method of dividing the hours—which even today is retained in many parts of the peninsula—the day ended with the Ave Maria, which was rung half an hour after sunset, at twenty-four o'clock. The usual supper time was at one hour of the night. "Noon was taken from the sun, but did not fall at a regular hour of the clock, and never at twelve. In winter, for instance, if the Ave Maria bell rang at half-past five of our modern time, the noon of the following day fell at half-past eighteen by the medieval clocks. In summer it might fall as early as three quarters past fifteen." Ave Roma Immortalis, Francis Marion Crawford, page 22.—Translator.]

his imagination with ugly apprehensions, he lacked courage to accost them and ask his way.

"Six miles, that churl said," he reflected. "If by going round about they grow to eight or ten, that same pair of legs that made the others will make these also. I am certainly not going towards Milan; therefore I am headed for the Adda. Trudge, trudge, trudge, and sooner or later I'll be there. The Adda hath a good voice, and when I am nigh it, I'll no longer need any one to tell me. If there is a skiff to cross in, I'll cross at once. If not, I'll bide the morrow in a field, or, like the sparrows, in a tree. Better a tree than a prison cell."

Soon he espied a lane running off to the left, and turned into it. At this hour, if he had fallen in with any one, he would not have scrupled so much to ask his way, but there was not a living soul to be heard. So he pushed on whither the road led him, communing thus with himself:

"I raise the de'il! I murder all the nobility! I have a packet of letters! My confederates keeping a watch for me! I'd pay something to meet that merchant on the other side of the Adda, —that plagued Adda! when shall I be across it?—and ask at my leisure where he picked up all his fine information. Be apprized now, my dear sir, that the thing was thus and so; that the de'il I raised was to help Ferrer, as if he had been my own brother; that those rascals, who according to you were my friends —because at a certain juncture I spoke like a Christian—were not loath to make brutal sport of me; that, while you were watching your shop, I was having my ribs bruised to rescue your worshipful director of supplies, whom I had never known or seen. Wait till I turn a hand again to help the nobility—True, we must do so for our soul's sake; they are our neighbors as well as another. And that great packet of letters in which the whole plot is described and which now is in the hands of the police, as you know for certain. Will you wager that I cannot conjure it up here without any aid from the devil? Behold!—One letter only?—Yes, worshipful sir, one letter only, and that written by a religious who could teach you more Christian doctrine than you ever knew, a religious one of whose hairs—without any of-

fence to you—is worth more than your whole beard. And 'tis written, this letter, as you see, to another religious—another man of a hundred. See now what rogues I have for friends. And learn to weigh your words another time, especially when you are speaking of your neighbor."

But before long these thoughts, and others resembling them, ceased entirely, and the circumstances of the present occupied all the faculties of our poor pilgrim. The fear of being pursued or detected, which had cast such gloom along his path in broad daylight, no longer annoyed him; but how many things now combined to make his progress more trying still! It was dark; the place was lonesome; his fatigue had increased to the point of being painful; and the night breeze, though low, was steady and keen enough to cause sore discomfort to one who still wore the garments he had donned thinking to be gone only a few minutes and to return home married and triumphant. But that which aggravated all his other troubles was this walking at random, groping his way, it might be said, in search of a place of rest and security.

Whenever he found himself passing through some hamlet, he crept along softly, yet so as to keep a lookout for doors that might still be open; but no sign did he see of any one stirring beyond an occasional vigil-lamp shining through some window-pane. If his road led through the uninhabited country, he would pause from time to time and stand listening for the welcome sound of the Adda, but all in vain. Hushed, too, was every other sound except that of the baying of dogs wafted through the air from some isolated grange like a lament and, at the same time, a menace. Upon his near approach the baying changed into short, angry barks, and, in passing by the gate itself, he heard, and almost saw, the brute with his muzzle at the aperture, redoubling his outcries—a circumstance which drove from his mind any temptation to knock and ask for shelter. Perhaps, even in the absence of dogs, he could not have brought himself to it.

"'Who is there? What do you want at such an hour? How have you come hither? Unfold yourself. Be there no inns to put up in?' This," he reflected, "is the greeting I should get,

even if my luck were good and there were no timid sleeper to take alarm and raise a hue-and-cry against thieves. One must needs have a good answer ready, and what answer have I? When folk hear a noise at night, naught occurs to them but robbers, evil-doers and treachery. They never think that an honest citizen can be abroad at night, unless it be a nobleman in his carriage." Therefore he saved this course as a last resort, and plodded on in the hope of finding the Adda, if not of crossing it, before morning, that he might not have to go in quest of it in broad daylight.

Trudge, trudge, trudge. The cultivated country now fades insensibly into a moorland strewn with broom and bracken. This seemed to him, if not a proof, at least some semblance of an argument, that a river was near by, and off he started by a path which cut across it. After a few steps he stopped to listen—still in vain. The irksomeness of travel was now intensified by the wildness of the place, which presented to the eye neither grape-vine nor mulberry-tree nor any other sign of human cultivation, such as at first afforded him a semi-companionship. He pushed ahead notwithstanding, and, to lay, or at least beguile, certain fancies or hallucinations which began to beset his mind,—the vestiges of tales heard in childhood,—he began to recite prayers for the dead by the way.

Little by little he found himself walking between clumps of a larger growth, thorns, scrub-oak and hawthorn. Walking incessantly onwards and quickening his gait, more from impatience than alacrity, he began to see an odd tree rising above the coppice, and, still farther along the same path, he perceived that he was approaching a wood. He felt a certain repugnance about entering it, yet overcame the impulse and pushed on; but the deeper in he plunged, the greater his repugnance grew and the more annoyance everything occasioned him. The trees he saw off in the distance represented the weird, distorted shapes of monsters; the shadow of the swaying tree-tops waving across his path, where here and there the moon shone through, alarmed him; even the crackling of the dry leaves on which he trod, or which he brushed aside in walking, fell upon his ear with an in-

effably disagreeable sound. His legs felt a frenzied impulse to run, and at the same time they appeared barely able to support his body. He felt the night wind sting his brow and cheeks more pitilessly; his flesh shuddered, as the blast began to lick his bare skin underneath his clothing and, penetrating even to the marrow of his tired and bruised bones, dampen the last spark of strength he had left.

At one time his heart sank within him, and that desolation, that vague terror, which his spirit had for a long while been fighting off, seemed suddenly to overmaster him.

He was on the point of succumbing completely, but, frightened by naught so much as his own terror, he summoned back his old-time courage and bade his heart hold firm. Thus reanimated temporarily, he paused where he stood, to take counsel with himself. He decided to take himself hence without more delay and retrace his steps to the last hamlet through which he had passed. He would return among men and seek shelter, even though it were in an inn. As he stood thus, the rustling of his feet among the leaves being hushed and all quiet around, he began to hear a sound—a murmur—the murmur of running water. He strains his ears, and now he is certain. "It is the Adda," he exclaims. It was like finding a friend, a brother, a deliverer. His fatigue almost disappeared, his nerve returned. He felt the blood pulse warm and free through his veins and confidence stiffen his thought. His uncertainty and dejection vanished to a great extent, and with no more hesitation he plunged deeper and deeper into the wood in the direction of the friendly sound.

In a few minutes he reached the brink of a high bank marking the extremity of the plain, and, peering down through the copse which clothed all its slope, he saw the gleam of running water. Then, raising his eye, he saw the opposite bank stretch out into a vast plain studded with hamlets, with the hills beyond, on one of which he descried a large, dull-white speck which, he thought, should be a city—Bergamo without doubt. Going a little way down the bank and pushing aside the thorny growth with his hands and arms, he looked below to see whether a boat might be stirring on the river, listening meanwhile for the sound

of oars. Nothing was to be seen or heard. Had it been a trifle less than the Adda, Renzo would have gone down to it at once and attempted to ford his way, but he well knew that the Adda was not a stream with which one could make so familiar.

He consequently set to deliberating with great calmness upon the course to follow. To climb a tree and wait there for perhaps six hours that yet remained till dawn, exposed to this wind and hoar-frost, lightly clad, as he was, were more than enough to freeze him in good earnest. To walk back and forth the whole time, besides being an ineffectual remedy against the inclement sky, would be asking overmuch of the poor legs that had already done more than their share. He recollected to have seen in one of the fields adjacent to the moor a straw-thatched cabin built of logs and wattle plastered over with clay, such as the Milanese peasants use in summer as a shelter in which to deposit their harvesting and come to watch it at night. At other seasons they are abandoned. He at once marked it for his hostelry, and retracing his path, traversed once more the wood, the coppice and the moor, and bent his steps towards the cabin. An old, worm-eaten door, torn from its hinges, was propped against the entrance, without lock or chain. Renzo opened it and went in. A wicker hurdle, secured by withes, swung in the air after the fashion of a hammock, but he did not take the trouble to mount. He saw a few handfuls of straw on the floor and thought to himself that even there a nap would taste sweet.

Before stretching himself out on this bed which Providence had spread for him, he knelt down to thank God for such a blessing as well as for all the succor He had lent him on this terrible day. He then recited his accustomed orisons, asking pardon, moreover, of the good God for having neglected them the preceding night —nay, for having (to quote his own words) gone to bed like a dog, and worse. "And hence it was," he silently subjoined, as he rested his hands on the straw and sank from a kneeling to a lying posture, "that so fine an awakening fell to my lot this morning." He then gathered about him all the straw that was left, contriving the best covering he might to temper the cold, which even here within doors made itself keenly felt. He drew him-

self up snugly underneath and promised himself a sound sleep, deeming that he had paid dear for its enjoyment.

But hardly had he closed his eyes when back and forth across his memory, or his imagination—I can't determine the precise place—flitted such an incessant concourse of people, that he was fain to bid sleep farewell. The mercer, the police-clerk and his bailiffs, the armorer, the innkeeper, Ferrer, the director of supplies, the comrades of the Full Moon, the mob on the street; then Don Abbondio; then Don Rodrigo—every one with whom Renzo had had differences.

Of the images which presented themselves only three were unassociated with bitter memories, untainted by suspicion, amiable throughout—two above all, of quite different aspects, 'tis true, but closely linked together in the heart of the youth—one, a vision of raven tresses, the other, a snow-white beard. But even the satisfaction he derived from these reveries was anything but unmixed or tranquil. In thinking of the good friar, he felt a livelier access of shame for his own follies, his foul intemperance, the botch he had made of the other's paternal advice. And in dwelling upon Lucia's image—We shall not essay to describe his feelings. The reader knows the circumstances; let him imagine the rest. And poor Agnese, how could he forget her? She who had taken him to her own, regarding him as one with her only daughter, and before receiving the title of mother adopting a mother's language and sentiments and in her actions displaying a mother's solicitude. But it lent a fresh pang, and not the least poignant, to his grief, to think that, in requital for precisely those loving intentions and kind wishes towards him, the poor woman now found herself evicted, almost a vagrant, facing an uncertain future, having gained trouble and tribulation there where she had looked to find rest and gladness in her declining years.

What a night, poor Renzo!—this, which was to have been the fifth of thy honeymoon! What a bridal-chamber! What a marriage-bed! And after such a day! And what tomorrow? and all the succeeding morrows? "God's will be done," he replied to the thoughts that vexed him most. "God's will be done! He knoweth what He is about. We are all in His keeping. May it

all go to expiate my sins! Lucia is so good! He will not make her suffer long, not long, not long. . . ."

Amid such thoughts as these, despairing now of wooing sleep, shivering with the cold that momentarily increased till his teeth chattered, he sighed for the coming of day, as he impatiently counted the slow-revolving hours. Counted them, I say; because every half-hour he could hear a clock ring out on the vast stillness of night—I fancy it was the clock at Trezzo. The first time its clangor struck his ear, it was so unexpected and he was so far at a loss to know whence it proceeded, that it came over him with the mysterious solemnity of a warning in unknown tones from an invisible messenger.

When, at length, the church-bell had struck eleven, which was the hour Renzo had determined upon for rising, he got up, fairly paralyzed with the cold, and, throwing himself upon his knees, performed his morning devotions with more than the usual fervor. Standing up, he stretched himself to the fullest extent of his limbs and shook his frame, as if to bring its members (which seemed to have become strangers to each other) back into their sockets again. Then, blowing into his palms and rubbing them briskly together, he opened the cabin door, and, first satisfying himself by a brief survey that there was no one about, he looked for his path of the preceding evening and, recognizing it, started on his way.

The sky announced a beautiful day. The pale moon hung in a corner of the heavens, shorn of her beams, yet conspicuous against the immense pale-blue background, which warmed imperceptibly to a rosy-yellow well down its eastern slope. Lower still a few slate-colored clouds stretched their long, irregular columns across the horizon, their lower rims tipped with fire, which instant by instant grew more vivid and dazzling. Towards the south other clouds, piled together in soft, airy masses, glowed with a thousand nameless colors—that Lombard sky, which is *so* beautiful when it *is* beautiful, so radiant, so peaceful. Had Renzo been walking there for pleasure, he would certainly have looked up and admired such a different daybreak from the one he was accustomed to see in his native mountains, but his attention was on the path, which he pursued with long

strides, by way both of warming his blood and arriving the sooner at his destination.

Retracing his way past fields, moor, coppice and wood, looking to the right and left and smiling—not without some shame at the same time—at his fears of a few hours back, he arrived at last at the brink of the bank and looked down. Between the branches he saw a fisherman's skiff coming slowly against the current near the hither shore. He descended at once among the brambles, and, reaching the water's edge, hailed the fisherman in a voice hardly above a whisper.

He meant to assume the air of one asking an insignificant favor, but unconsciously it was with rather more of entreaty in his tone that he beckoned the oarsman to pull to land. The latter first made a survey of the bank, then cast one glance upstream and another downstream and headed towards Renzo. Renzo, standing on the very verge, indeed with one foot almost in the water, seized the bow of the skiff, and, jumping in, "Would you be so obliging," he said, "as to row me across—for a consideration?" The fisherman had guessed his wishes and was already pulling for the other side. Renzo, seeing another oar in the bottom of the boat, stooped down and seized it.

"Softly, softly," said the owner. But, seeing with what deftness the youth handled the instrument and prepared to employ it, "Ah!" he subjoined, "you follow the trade."

"A little," answered Renzo, and set to work with more than an amateur's strength and skill. From time to time, without ever relaxing his industry, he shot a jealous glance at the bank they were leaving behind, and another, of impatience, at the side for which they were bound, fuming inwardly at not being able to proceed thither by the shortest way—for at that point the current was too strong to admit of being ferried straight across, and accordingly the boat had to hold a diagonal course, which the force of propulsion and the momentum of the stream together combined to determine. As is usual in perplexing situations, where the difficulties at first present themselves in mass and then come forward one by one as we proceed, Renzo, now that the Adda was as good as crossed, was irked at not knowing for cer-

tain whether it there formed the boundary, or whether, having got over one obstacle, there still remained another to surmount. Hence, calling to the fisherman and nodding towards the dull-white speck which he had observed the preceding night and which now showed up much more clearly, "Is that village Bergamo?" he inquired.

"The city of Bergamo," replied the fisher.

"And is this Bergamask soil?"

"The land of St. Mark."

"Long live St. Mark!" exclaimed Renzo. The fisher was silent.

At last they reached the bank. Renzo flung himself out, thanking God in his heart and the boatman with his lips. Then, thrusting his hand into his pocket, he drew forth a *berlinga,* which, under the circumstances, taxed his resources not a little, and handed it to the honest laborer. The latter gave another glance at the Milanese shore as well as up and down the river, and reached for the gratuity, at the same time compressing his lips and placing his finger-tip on them for emphasis. The gesture was accompanied by an expressive wink. He then wished his patron a pleasant voyage and started back.

Lest this person's prompt yet cautious courtesy towards a stranger should surprise our readers unduly, we ought to inform them that smugglers and bandits frequently sought a similar service of him, which he was wont to render, not so much for the sake of the petty and precarious emolument that might follow, as not to arouse the enmity of such classes. He rendered it, I say, whenever he was sure of not being seen either by collectors of duty, police or spies. Thus, without entertaining any more benevolence for the former than for the latter, he aimed to satisfy both with that impartiality which is the ordinary characteristic of such as are obliged to deal with one set of men and liable to be called to a reckoning by another.

Renzo paused a moment on the bank to contemplate the opposite shore—that soil which had burned his feet but a few moments ago. "Ah! I am really out of it," was his first thought. "May we long be strangers, accursed land!" was his second—his

farewell to his native country. But the next thought flew to those whom he had left behind him in that land. Then, folding his arms on his breast and heaving a sigh, he looked down at the water that glided past his feet and mused: "It hath flowed under the Bridge." (Thus, by antonomasia, his village was wont to designate the bridge at Lecco.) "Ah, rascally world!—Peace! God's will be done!"

He turned his back on such melancholy objects and set out on his way, taking for his guide the speck of white on the mountain-slope, until such time as he should find some one to show him the right road. And it would have been worth the reader's while to see the open manner with which he now accosted wayfarers and in straightforward language named the town where his cousin resided. He learned from the first informant that he still had nine miles to go.

It was not a gay journey. Aside from the troubles which Renzo brought along with him, his eye was each moment afflicted with distressing spectacles, which made him realize that he would find in the country through which he was now progressing the same scarcity he had left at home. All along the way, but more particularly in passing through hamlets and villages, he met paupers at every step—not professional paupers (their distress showed itself more in their faces than their dress)—peasants, mountaineers, artisans, entire families, mingling entreaties, lamentations and weeping in one confused murmur. Besides moving him to compassion and sadness the sight made him reflect on his prospects.

"Who can say," he mused, "how I shall make out? Perhaps there is no work now as in years past. But pshaw! Bortolo used to like me well. He is a good fellow and will not fail me after so many invitations to come, now that he hath made some money. And besides, the Providence that hath befriended me thus far is not going to desert me now."

Meanwhile his appetite, of which he had been sensible now for some time, went on growing from mile to mile; and, though Renzo, when he first began to give heed to it, felt that he could bear up without too much inconvenience under the two or three miles

which yet remained of his journey, he reflected, on the other hand, that it would not be a very handsome thing to present himself to his cousin as a beggar and ask for bread as his very first greeting. He drew forth from his pocket his entire riches, and, rolling them across his palm, computed the total. It was a calculation which required no great amount of arithmetic, still there was plenty for a modest repast. He entered an inn to appease his hunger, and, in point of fact, still retained some few pence after he had paid his reckoning.

On coming out, he found the doorstep beset, and in fact almost blocked, by two women disposed at his feet in between a sitting and a reclining posture; the one advanced in years, the other much younger, holding an infant that vainly sought nourishment first at one breast, then at the other, and voiced its disappointment by protracted cries. All were of the color of death. Standing by them was a man, whose features and frame bore traces of a vigor that was now subdued, and well-nigh consumed, by distress. The three extended their palms to him as he was swinging past with an elastic step, contentment printed on his brow, but no word was spoken. What could words add to such an appeal?

"There is a Providence above," quoth Renzo; and, thrusting his hand into his pocket, he emptied it of its few coppers, and, bestowing them in the palm nearest him, he struck out again on his way.

The refreshment and the good deed (because we are of soul and body conjoined) had brought back all his thoughts to comfort and gaiety. Certainly this stripping himself of his last resources had redounded more to confidence in the future than the finding of ten times that sum would have done. For if, to minister that day's wherewithal to poor wretches fainting in the street, Providence had held in reserve naught other but just the last farthings of a stranger and a fugitive, uncertain himself of tomorrow's sustenance, who could believe that It would let him go hungry whom It had used for such a purpose and in whom It had inspired such a lively, efficacious and undaunted trust in Its protection? It was some such thought as this that ran through

the lad's mind, in vaguer form, however, than even this in which we have tried to express it.

Along the rest of the road his problems were all smoothed away, as he went on reconsidering them. The hard times were coming to an end. Each year would yield its harvest. Meanwhile he had his cousin Bortolo and his own abilities to fall back upon and, in addition, a little money at home, which he would send for at once. With this he could live from one day to the next, if it came to the worst, until the return of plenty. "And once plenty hath returned," Renzo continued to muse, "industry will hum and employers will vie with one another for Milanese artisans, who are the best craftsmen. The Milanese now wax independent (for, if one wants skilful workmen, one must pay), and a man can earn enough to feed several mouths and put a little aside. Then I'll have a scrivener write for the womenfolk to come—But why bide so long? Would not our little hoard, in sooth, have kept the pot a-boiling back there the whole winter, if need were? So will it here. Priests are to be found everywhere. So dear Agnese and Lucia come, and we set to keeping house. How pleasant to go a-strolling together along this very road! Nay, to go by cart all the way to the Adda and picnic on the bank—just on the brink of the river. 'There,' I will say, 'is the point where I embarked, there the bramble where I started down, there the place where I stood looking for a skiff. . . .'"

At last he reached his cousin's town. On coming into it and even before setting foot within its precincts at all, he remarked a lofty building with several ranges of high windows. Recognizing it for a spinning-mill, he entered, and, pitching his voice above the din of machinery and falling water, he inquired whether a certain Bortolo Castagneri was employed there.

"Master Bortolo! There he is."

"Master?" thought Renzo. "A good sign." Then, seeing his relative, he ran towards him, announcing his presence. The other recognized the lad as he turned around, and, throwing up his arms with an exclamation of surprise, he fell upon his neck. After these first greetings Bortolo drew the youth away from the

racket of machines and the gaze of the curious into another room and said: "I am glad to see thee. But what a precious wag thou art. As often as I invited thee, thou wouldst never come; and now thou appearest at a somewhat ticklish moment."

"If the truth must out, I am not come of my own free will," said Renzo. And with the greatest brevity, yet not without much emotion, he recounted his painful tale.

"That's a horse of another color," quoth Bortolo. "Poor Renzo! But thou hast counted on me, and I'll not fail thee. In troth, there is no demand for workmen now. 'Tis much if each employer holdeth his own hands, so as not to lose them and divert his business elsewhere. But the master likes me and hath great store. And, between me and thee, he oweth it in great measure to me, all boasting aside. He furnisheth the capital and I my poor ability. I am head-spinner, didst know? and, between ourselves, his right-hand man. Poor Lucia Mondella! I remember her, as 'twere yesterday. A good lass! Always the most recollected in church; and when one passed by her cottage—Methinks I can see that cottage, just beyond the village, with a fine fig-tree surmounting the garden-wall——"

"No, no; no more of that."

"I meant to say that, whenever one passed by the cottage, one always heard the ceaseless whir of her spinning-wheel. And that ruffianly Don Rodrigo! He was already headed that way even in my time, but, from what thou tellest me, he now plays the fiend outright—only while God lets him hold the bit in his teeth. So, as I was saying, hunger maketh itself felt somewhat here too —Speaking of hunger, how is it with thyself?"

"I ate shortly since on my way."

"And for money—how are we off?"

Renzo extended his hand, and, bringing it to his mouth, blew a puff of wind into the hollow of his palm.

"No matter," said Bortolo. "I have some. Give it ne'er a thought, for thou shalt be returning it in a trice—once the times have changed (if God so wills)—and still have some to spare."

"I have a trifle at home. I'll send for that."

"Very good, and, in the meantime, call upon me. God hath

been good to me that I might do good to others; and to whom should it be, if not to friends and kindred?"

"There is a Providence, indeed, just as I said," exclaimed Renzo, as he affectionately wrung his good cousin's hand.

"So," resumed the latter, "they have turned Bedlam loose in Milan. To me it appeareth to border a little on madness. We have already heard some echoes of it here, but now I would fain learn about it more at length from thee. We shall not lack matters for conversing, eh? Now among us, mark you, the fashion is to go more softly and carry through the matter in hand with a shade more of discretion. The City of Bergamo purchased two thousand pack-loads of grain from a Venetian merchant ('tis a grain that cometh from Turkey, but we cannot be too nice in choosing when we'd go hungry else). Now, hark what befell. It happened that the city-fathers of Verona and of Brescia barred the way and directed that no grain should pass. What thinkest thou the Bergamasks did then? They despatched to Venice Lorenzo Torre, an advocate, but such an advocate as is born but once in a generation. He posted off at once to Venice, and, being admitted to audience, he demanded to know of the doge what those worshipful city-fathers had taken into their heads to do. Such a speech he made that were fit, they say, to be put in a book! That's what it is to have a man with a tongue in his head! At once an order was sent back that the grain should be allowed to pass, and that the magistrates should not only not interfere with the train but that they should provide it with a safe-conduct besides; and even now it is on the way hither. And the country people were not forgotten, either. Giovanbatista Biava —the representative of Bergamo at Venice and another grand man for you—gave the senate to understand that the peasants are suffering from hunger as well as the burghers, and the senate voted them four thousand bushels of millet. This millet will make our bread go further, d'ye see; and, if it fails entirely, we can still live on what the flocks and gardens provide. The Lord hath blessed me, as I said before. And now I shall take thee to the proprietor. I have often told him about thee, and thou shalt not fail of a kind reception, for he is a Bergamask of the old

school—large-hearted. In troth, he was not expecting thee at this time, but when he heareth thy story—Besides, he understandeth how to treat men of the craft, for business will go on when the dearth is a thing of the past. But first, I must warn thee of something. Dost know what they call us Milanese in this country?"

"What do they call us?"

"They call us 'geese.' "

"It is not a pretty name."

"The fact remains, that, if one was born in Milanese territory and would live in the province of Bergamo, he must put up with it in holy peace. For these people, to call a Milanese a goose is liking calling a nobleman 'his lordship.' "

"They call it, I fancy, to those who brook it."

"My dear fellow, if you are not disposed to drink the word like water, do not reckon on living here. One would needs have his knife in his hand at every minute. And even supposing you killed two—three—four, 'twould end by some one killing you; and then what a fine fate to go before the judgment-seat of God with three or four murders on thy soul!"

"And a Milanese who had a little—?" And here he tapped his finger on his head as he had done before in the Full Moon. "I mean one who would be master of his craft?"

"It's all one; he's a goose here as well as the next. Dost know how the master puts it when he speaketh of me to his friends? It is: 'That goose hath been a God-send for my business,' and 'I would be in sore straits but for that goose of mine.' Custom hath it so."

" 'Tis a stupid custom. And, seeing that we know how to work (for, after all, 'tis we who have brought the art hither and who keep it alive), is it possible they have not amended their error?"

"Up to the present, no. With time, perhaps—but for those who are already men there is no remedy. They've contracted the habit and they'll never drop it. And what great matter is it, after all? Such politeness as our own compatriots showed thee, and the further honors they had in store, were quite a different tale."

"Aye, 'tis true. If this be the only evil——"

"Now that thou art convinced on this point, all will go well. Come to the master, and take heart of grace."

All in fact did go well, and so exactly as Bortolo had foretold that we deem a more detailed recital useless. And it truly was a dispensation of Providence, for we shall see presently how little reason Renzo had for building upon the money and belongings he had left at home.

Chapter XVIII

On that same day, the thirteenth of November, a courier arrived at Lecco and presented a despatch to the worshipful podestà from the prefect of police, with instructions to make all perquisitions possible or needful to ascertain whether one Lorenzo Tramaglino, a young silk-spinner, having escaped from the custody *praedicti egregii domini capitanei,* has returned, *palam vel clam,* to his native village, *ignotum* as to its precise identity, *verum in territorio Leuci*: *quod si compertum fuerit sic esse,* let his worship the podestà proceed, *quanta maxima diligentia fieri poterit,* to seize his person, and, having bound him as it behooveth, *videlizet* with good iron manacles, in that thongs have proved insufficient for the said subject, have him brought to jail and detained there under strong guard, to be delivered up to the agent that shall be sent to get him; and, in the one event as in the other, *accedatis ad domum praedicti Laurentii Tramalinii; et, facta debita diligentia, quidquid ad rem repertum fuerit auferatis; et informationes de illius prava qualitate, vita et complicibus sumatis;* and concerning all that shall be said or done, found or not found, taken or left, *diligenter referatis.*

The podestà, after having made morally sure that the culprit had not returned, summoned the consul of the village, who conducted him to the specified residence with a numerous retinue of clerks and police. The house was locked, and either no one had the keys to it or, if some one had, he was not in evidence. The door was, accordingly, battered down and the premises were duly searched—that is to say, were subjected to the same treatment as a city taken by assault. News of the visitation was immediately bruited through the whole country-side, and so reached the ears of Father Cristoforo. No less astounded than grieved, he made inquiries here and there to gain some light on the cause of so unexpected an occurrence, but gleaned nothing more than

idle speculations. He wrote forthwith to Father Bonaventura, hoping to receive more definite information from him.

Meanwhile Renzo's friends and kinsfolk were cited to testify what they might know of his evil character. It became a calamity, a disgrace and a crime to bear the name of Tramaglino. The village was topsyturvy. Little by little it transpired that Renzo had escaped from the hands of justice right in Milan itself and then vanished. Rumor said that it was a grave charge, but the facts could not be got at or were subject to a hundred different versions. The more heinous the offence, the less credence it received in the village, where Renzo was known for a good youth. The greater number presumed and whispered among themselves that it was an intrigue set afoot by the tyranny of Don Rodrigo to ruin his humble rival. So true is it that injustice is at times done even to rogues themselves by forming judgments without the necessary knowledge of facts.

But we, who have the run of his mind, so to speak, can state as a fact that, though he had had no part in Renzo's catastrophe, it delighted him as much as if it had been his own achievement, and furnished him with matter for triumph with his intimates, especially Count Attilio. According to his program the latter should have been in Milan at this time, but at the first news of the rioting and the rabble parading the streets in anything but a mood for receiving blows, he thought it well to stay in the country till quiet was restored. He remained the more readily that, having given offence to many of his townsmen, he now had reason to fear lest one of all those who nourished a grievance and who submitted only out of helplessness, would feel emboldened by the present circumstances to wipe out all the arrears of vengeance.

This suspense did not last long. The order from Milan to proceed against Renzo was already one indication that matters had resumed their ordinary train. Almost simultaneously he received positive assurances of the fact. Count Attilio departed forthwith, warmly urging upon his cousin to persist in his undertaking and carry his point, and on his part promising to go about the friar's removal without delay, towards attaining which

end the fortunate mischance to the despised rival furnished him with a strong card. Scarce had Attilio taken his departure, when Griso arrived safe and sound from Monza and reported to his master what he had been able to learn: that Lucia had taken refuge in such and such a convent, under the protection of such and such a noble lady; that she remained in perpetual concealment, just as if she were herself a nun, never setting foot outside the door and assisting at the services of the church from a grated window—a circumstance which displeased not a few, who, having got some wind of her adventures and heard her face greatly extolled, would fain have seen something of its workmanship.

This recital roused a demon in Don Rodrigo's breast, or rather, infuriated the one which already presided there. So many circumstances favorable to his designs inflamed his passion constantly more and more—that is to say, the combination of rage, injured pride and infamous caprice which constituted his passion. Renzo was gone, and was become a fugitive and outlaw to boot, so that any crime against him became lawful, and even his affianced might be considered legitimate prey. The only man in the world who could or would take his part and make a protest loud enough to be heard afar off by persons of consequence, the mad friar, would, in all probability, shortly be put out of the way. And here arose a new obstacle, which not only counterbalanced all these advantages, but rendered them, one might say, worthless. A convent at Monza, even were there no princess in the case, was too hard a nut for the teeth of Don Rodrigo, and haunt it in fancy as much as he might, he could imagine no way of making an entrance by hook or by crook, by force or by strategy. He was on the point of abandoning the enterprise. He would go to Milan, and go by a round about way to avoid Monza, and at Milan he would throw himself into the midst of friends and diversions, and beguile with thoughts of unalloyed joy this other thought which henceforth would be a torture. But then, but then, but then; what of these friends? Such friends crave wary handling. Instead of distraction he might look forward to new vexations in their company, for Attilio would certainly have already blabbed the affair, and they would be on tip-

toe with curiosity. He would be questioned on all sides for news of the fair mountaineer, and their questions must be answered. His intention was known; he had put his hand to the plough; what had he reaped? The gage was down (the cause was a trifle shady, 'tis true; but, pshaw! one cannot always regulate one's desires—the point is to gratify them)—how had it been redeemed? By giving in to a bumpkin and to a friar? Faugh! And when a happy chance had removed the one gratuitously and a skilful friend the other, the poltroon had not been able to profit by the conjuncture, but withdrew cravenly from the contest.

It was more than enough to disqualify one from ever raising his head among gentlemen, unless, indeed, at the price of having his hand perpetually on his sword. And again, how return to this villa and this hamlet, or how remain there, with the stigma of failure upon him, to say nothing of the poignant reminders of his passion that would confront him at every turn, with the public hatred increased against him in the same proportion as his prestige was diminished, to read on the face of every churl that bowed before him the bitter tokens of triumph in his discomfiture? The path of wickedness, here observes our manuscript, is a broad one, but that is not saying it is a comfortable. It hath its own goodly share of stumbling-blocks and rough places, and is irksome and weary traveling, for all that it leadeth downwards.

Being unwilling to draw back or to halt, and unable of himself to go ahead, Don Rodrigo still thought of an expedient by which he might succeed. It was to ask the aid of a certain person, who could often reach further than others could even see—a man—or a devil—to whom difficulties were frequently only incentives to act. But this course was not without its own inconveniences and risks, the graver that they could not be gauged beforehand, because no one could foresee to what lengths he might go, once he embarked with this man—a powerful auxiliary, to be sure, but none the less an absolute and dangerous captain.

Such thoughts as these kept Don Rodrigo hesitating for several days before an alternative that was more than annoying. Meanwhile a letter arrived from his cousin, telling him that the plot was well launched. Soon after the lightning came the thunder.

That is to say, one fine morning people heard that Father Cristoforo had left the monastery of Pescarenico. This happy result so promptly obtained and Attilio's letter containing much encouragement and threatening a vast deal of chaff, inclined Don Rodrigo more and more to embrace the dangerous course. What clinched matters was the unexpected news that Agnese had returned home—one barrier less to Lucia's presence. Let us give an account of these two events, beginning with the latter.

Hardly were the two unfortunate women settled in their retreat, when the news of the hurly-burly at Milan spread through Monza and, consequently, to the convent also, and, in the wake of the great topic itself, an infinite series of details which went on multiplying and changing momentarily. The portress, who from her quarters could keep one ear towards the street and another towards the convent, picked up shreds of information from all sides and communicated them to her lodgers. "They have imprisoned two–six–eight–four–seven of them," she would announce; "and these are to be hanged, some before the Bakery *delle Grucce,* some at the head of the street where the director of supplies lives—Hold, hold; listen to this! One escaped, and he was from Lecco or its vicinity. His name I do not know, but some one will come along who can tell it me, to see if you be acquainted."

This announcement, together with the circumstance of Renzo's arrival in Milan just on the fateful day itself, gave some uneasiness to the two women, and to Lucia in particular. What, then, must have been their state of mind, when their reporter came with the information: "He who scampered off to save his neck is from your own hamlet—a silk-spinner named Tramaglino. Do you know him?"

Lucia, who sat hemming something or other, let the work fall from her hands and turned white. The change that came over her was so complete that, if the portress had been nearer, she would certainly have remarked it. But she was standing in the doorway with Agnese, who, though shaken in turn, was yet able to put on a stouter front. By way of saying something, she replied that in a small hamlet every one knew every one else, and

so she knew him, but that she could not conceive how such a hap should befall him, seeing that he was a good, steady youth. She then inquired whether he had escaped for sure, and whither.

"That he hath escaped, all agree; whither, is unknown. Maybe they will yet lay him by the heels, maybe he is in safety. But if he falls into their clutches again, this steady youth——"

Here, happily, the speaker was summoned and went her ways. The reader is left to imagine the state of mother and daughter. For several days the poor widow and her desolate child were fain to rest in this uncertainty, speculating on the possible causes and consequences of the distressing occurrence, and commenting, either mentally or, when they could do so, in a low tone between themselves, on the terrible words they had just heard.

At length, one Thursday, a man arrived at the convent and called for Agnese. He was a fishmonger of Pescarenico on one of his regular trips to Milan to vend his wares. The good Father Cristoforo had begged him to stop at the convent on his way through Monza and convey his greetings to the two women, relating at the same time what he knew of Renzo's sad adventure, and recommending patience and confidence in God. He, poor friar though he was, would certainly not forget them and would have an eye always open for an opportunity to be of assistance. Meantime he would not fail to let them have news of him every week, either by this means or by some other. Of Renzo the only fresh tidings the messenger could give with certainty were the visitation of his home and the search for his person, the latter being fruitless, as Renzo was known for certain to be safe on Bergamask soil. Such an assurance, it need not be said, was a great balm to Lucia. Thenceforward she wept more easily and her tears were less bitter; she experienced greater comfort in pouring out her heart secretly to her mother, and in all her prayers was mingled the note of thankfulness.

Gertrude often summoned her to a private parlor she had, and at times engaged her in conversation at great length, taking delight in the poor child's innocence and her gentleness of manner and in hearing herself thanked and blessed at every instant. She also related a part (the untarnished part) of her own his-

tory—what she had suffered to embrace this life of suffering, while Lucia's first suspicious wonder gradually turned to pity. She found in her benefactress' story more than enough to explain what there was of eccentricity in her deportment, especially with the aid of Agnese's theory about the brains of the nobility. Much, however, as she might feel inclined to reciprocate the confidence which Gertrude displayed, it did not even enter her head to speak of her new anxieties and misfortunes or to tell who was this silk-spinner that had escaped the toils of justice, for fear of spreading a report so fraught with pain and scandal. She also parried the nun's inquisitive advances in regard to that part of her story which preceded the betrothal; but this was not from motives of prudence. It was because, to the mind of the innocent maiden, this was a thornier tale—one more difficult to broach—than any which her ladyship had related or could have to relate. These dealt with tyranny, treachery, suffering—things that were ugly and painful, but still that might be mentioned, whereas her tale was all interwoven with a sentiment the name of which it seemed impossible to pronounce in speaking of herself and for which she could find no substitute that did not appear too barefaced. That name was "love."

At times Gertrude almost resented this coyness, but it was accompanied with such amiability, such respectfulness, such gratitude, and also such trust! At times perhaps this modesty, so delicate, so jealous of its integrity, displeased her still more on another account, but such considerations disappeared in the suavity of the thought which recurred to her at each instant in looking upon Lucia: "I am doing a good deed." It was true; because, in addition to the shelter she afforded, these discourses and these familiar endearments were of no small comfort to Lucia. She found another in continual work. She was forever beseeching them for something to do. Even to the parlor she always brought some needlework to keep her hands employed. But how painful thoughts will obtrude themselves everywhere! Every little while, as she sewed on and on (a new occupation for her), her mind conjured up her spinning-wheel, and in its wake what a host of associations!

The next Thursday the fishmonger or some other messenger returned with Father Cristoforo's greetings and the corroboration of Renzo's successful flight. Of more definite information in regard to his disaster there was not one word, because, as the reader has already been informed, the Capuchin's hopes in this matter were built upon his confrère in Milan to whom he had recommended the youth, and this religious replied that he had seen neither the letter nor the bearer—that a countryman had, indeed, called for him at the monastery, but not finding him in, had gone off and not been seen since.

On the following Thursday no one appeared, and for poor Lucia and her mother this was not only the privation of a much desired and much hoped-for comfort, but also, as is the case with every trifle to those in affliction and difficulties, the occasion of uneasiness and of a hundred harassing suspicions. Even before this development Agnese had thought of making a flying visit to her home; this default of the promised messenger determined her. For Lucia it was a serious matter to be thus taken from under her mother's wing, but her frenzied desire for news and the security she felt in this well-guarded and holy asylum overcame her aversion. So it was decided between them that Agnese would on the following day go and wait on the street for the fishmonger, who would pass that way in returning from Milan, and ask of his courtesy for a place in his cart and transportation back to her native mountains. She found him, in fact, and inquired whether Father Cristoforo had given no commission for her. The man had been fishing the whole day previous to his departure and had heard nothing from the friar. She did not have to beg for the favor she desired, and, bidding adieu to her ladyship and, not without many tears, to her daughter, to whom she promised to send news of herself at once and to return soon, she departed.

Nothing of note happened on the journey. They rested part of the night at an inn, as was customary, and, setting out the next morning before daybreak, they reached Pescarenico early. Agnese dismounted at the monastery-square, separated from her conductor with many a "God-reward-you," and, seeing that she was on the ground, decided, before going home, to see her kind

benefactor. She rang the bell, and the door was opened by Fra Galdino—him of the walnuts.

"Oh, my good woman, what wind bringeth thee hither?"

"I am come to see Father Cristoforo."

"Father Cristoforo? He is not here."

"Oh! Will he be long gone?"

"Why—!" quoth the friar, elevating his shoulders and enveloping his shorn head thereby in the depths of his cowl.

"Where is he gone?"

"To Rimini."

"To where?"

"To Rimini."

"What village is that?"

"La! la! la!" answered the friar, seeking by a tremendous downward sweep of his extended arm to convey the idea of great distance.

"Ah, woe's me! And why did he go away so suddenly?"

"Because the father-provincial wished it so."

"And wherefore send him away? him who did so much good here? Oh, Lord in Heaven!"

"If superiors had to give reasons for their commands, where would obedience come in, my good woman?"

"True, but this is my undoing."

"Dost know how 'twill have been? They will have been in need of a good preacher at Rimini (there be such everywhere, 'tis true, but at times it needs a man jump for the purpose). The father-provincial over there will have written to our father-provincial here, whether perchance he had such and such a subject, and our father-provincial will have said: 'Father Cristoforo is just the man.' It must have fallen out in just such wise, d'ye see?"

"Ah, woe betide us! When did he leave?"

"The day before yesterday."

"See! Had I but given heed to my inspiration and come a few days sooner. And 'tis not known when he will return? about when?"

"La! my good woman, 'tis known to the father-provincial—if,

indeed, even he knoweth. When one of our preachers takes wing, no one can tell where he will perch next. He is sought high and low, and we have monasteries in the four quarters of the globe. Suppose, now, Father Cristoforo maketh a stir at Rimini with his Lenten course— Because he doth not always preach off-hand as he did here for fisher-folk and peasants; for city pulpits he hath his fine sermons all written out and full of learning. So the fame of this great preacher goeth abroad in those parts, and he is sought for at—Heaven knows where. Then there is no choice but to send him; because we live by the charity of the whole world, and 'tis but just we should be at the service of the whole world."

"Oh, merciful God, merciful God!" again exclaimed Agnese, on the verge of tears. "What shall I do without him? He was a father to us. We are undone."

"Hark'ee, my good woman. 'Tis true Father Cristoforo was a pattern of a man, but there be others, see you now—men of parts, men with hearts full of charity, men who can deal equally with poor folk or gentles. There is Father Atanasio; would you him? Or Father Girolamo? Or Father Zaccaria? He is a man who counts, is Father Zachary, see you now. And reck not, as certain ignorant persons will be doing, that he is so gaunt, and his voice so thin and cracked, and has such a stingy, sickly looking beard; for—I do not say to preach—every one hath his gift—but to give advice, he is an oracle, d'ye see."

"Oh, cry mercy!" exclaimed Agnese in that tone of mingled gratitude and impatience with which we receive tenders that connote another's good-will rather than our own convenience. "What skills it how much of an oracle another may or may not be, when the poor man that's gone was he who knew our case and had everything in readiness to help us?"

"Then you must be reconciled."

"I know that," replied Agnese. "Pardon the intrusion."

"And wherefore, my good woman? I am sorry for your disappointment. And, if you decide to call for one of our fathers, the monastery will be here when you return. I'll soon show up in quest of oil."

"Fare thee well," returned Agnese, and bent her steps towards her own village, forlorn, confused and in dismay—not unlike a poor, blind man that has lost his staff.

Being somewhat better informed than was Fra Galdino, we are able to state how the occurrence really came about. Hardly had he set foot in Milan before Attilio went, as he had promised Don Rodrigo, to call upon their uncle of the privy council. (This was an advisory board made up of thirteen aristocrats of the sword and the gown, who acted as the governor's consultors and who, when this official died or was changed, assumed his functions.) The count-uncle, who belonged to the aristocracy of the gown, was one of the senior members of the council and enjoyed therein a certain degree of prestige, but, in exploiting this prestige and in imposing its recognition upon the others, he remained without a peer. This was the aim which regulated the minutest details of his conduct—his habitual ambiguity of speech, his power of looking wise when silent, his trick of leaving sentences unfinished, his fashion of puckering up his eyes, as much as to say: My mouth is sealed, the facility with which he could foster hopes without committing himself and convey a threat even in the act of bowing—all of which redounded in greater or less degree to his own aggrandizement. And so successful had his method proved that even his "I can do nothing in this matter," said at times in pure truth but in such a way as to appear like falsehood, served to heighten the credit and, consequently, the reality of his power—not very unlike those boxes, which are still seen occasionally in pharmacy-shops, that bear certain words in Arabic on the outside and have nothing within but emptiness, but still serve to maintain the repute of the establishment.

This self-importance of the count, which for a long time had gone on growing by imperceptible degrees, had latterly gained ground prodigiously at a stride through the extraordinary occasion of a trip to Madrid on a mission to the court. The story of his reception there is one which the reader should have heard from his own lips. We shall only instance that Duke Olivares treated him with particular marks of graciousness and admitted him into his confidence to the extent of asking him on one oc-

casion, in the presence, he might say, of half the court, how he liked Madrid, and, on another occasion, of telling him, as they stood alone in a window-corner, that the cathedral of Milan was the greatest temple in the king's dominions.

After paying his own respects to his uncle and conveying those of his cousin, Attilio put on a serious countenance, which he knew how to assume at times, and said: "I believe it my duty, without any derogation from the confidence I owe Rodrigo, to acquaint our right-honorable uncle with an affair which, unless he taketh a hand, may become serious and bear consequences——"

"Another of his escapades, I trow."

"In justice to my cousin I must say the fault is not on his side. But his blood is up, and, as I say, there is none save our right-honorable uncle who——"

"Come; let us hear what it is."

"There is a Capuchin friar of the neighborhood who entertains a grudge towards Don Rodrigo, and the thing hath come to such a pass that——"

"How many times have I told both of you to let the friars stew in their own juice? Enough that they bother the heads of those whose duty it is—upon whom it devolves—" (Here he puffed out his cheeks.) "But for the rest of you, who can steer clear of them——"

"Most noble uncle, it is my duty in this connection to tell thee that Rodrigo would have steered clear of him if he could. 'Tis the friar that cherishes a rancor, and he hath taken it upon himself to provoke my cousin at every turn——"

"What the foul fiend hath a friar to do with my nephew?"

"To begin with, he is a notorious fire-eater, who maketh it a business to be at feud with all cavaliers. He hath constituted himself champion, or director, or something of the sort, to a young peasant lass from those parts, and his charitable interest in this baggage is—I do not say designing, but of a most jealous, suspicious, sensitive character."

"I understand," quoth the count; and across the background of coarseness imprinted on his face by nature, and overlaid later

with a thick mask of diplomacy, there shot a flash of suspicion that made a pretty picture indeed to behold.

"Now, for some time past the friar is possessed with the hallucination that Don Rodrigo entertained I know not what designs upon this wench——"

"Hallucination! hallucination! Do not I know Don Rodrigo? 'Twould need some other advocate than your lordship to acquit him of such charges as these."

"Most noble uncle, that Rodrigo may have ventured some pleasantry with the wench in meeting her on the road, I am not slow to believe. He is young and, in a word, is not a Capuchin. But our uncle's time is not to be taken up with such fripperies as these. The essential thing is that the friar hath set himself to blackguard Rodrigo and seeketh to turn the whole country-side against him——"

"And the other friars?"

"They do not meddle, knowing him for a hot-head and having all due respect for Don Rodrigo. But on the other hand, the friar hath great influence with the peasants, before whom he sets up for a saint, and——"

"He doth not know, I trow, that Rodrigo is my nephew."

"Doth not know it? Nay, that is what maketh him the more devilish."

"What? How so?"

"Because—and he goeth about boasting of it—he taketh a keener delight in putting Rodrigo's nose out of joint, precisely because he hath a natural protector of such authority as your lordship. He affects to laugh at men of rank and statesmen—says that St. Francis's cord can tie up swords as well as monks' habits, and that——"

"The insolent shaveling! What is his name?"

"Fra Cristoforo of—" said Attilio; and the count, taking a memorandum-book from a drawer of his desk, wrote therein the ill-fated name, puffing like a porpoise the while.

"He hath always been," Attilio pursued in the meanwhile, "of the same stamp. His life is known. He was a base-born knave, who, finding himself with something more than enough to stave

off hunger, wished to vie with the nobility of his neighborhood, and for rage at not being able to carry his point with all, he killed one of them and, to save his neck, turned monk."

"Bravo! my fine friar. We shall see to him, we shall see to him," went on the count, as he continued to puff.

"Now," pursued Attilio, "he is more enraged than ever, because a plan he laid great store by hath miscarried; and by this token may my most noble uncle know what sort of man he was. Whether it was with a view to saving this wench from the dangers of the world or for some other reason,—you conceive me,—however it may have been, he wished to marry her off without fail, and had already found the cuck—the man. This was another of his creatures, a caitiff whom my right-honorable uncle, it may be and will be without doubt, knoweth by name, for I am certain the privy council hath had to occupy itself with this self-same subject."

"Who is he?"

"A silk-spinner named Lorenzo Tramaglino—the same who——"

"Lorenzo Tramaglino!" exclaimed the count. "Bravo! capital, indeed, sir priest! To be sure—in good sooth—he had a letter for— What a shame that— But no matter; very good. And why doth the noble Don Rodrigo tell me nothing of all this? Why doth he permit matters to come to such a pass and not have recourse to the one who both can and will guide and sustain him?"

"I shall tell the truth even in this," pursued Attilio. "On the one hand, knowing how many cares our illustrious uncle hath on his mind" (the illustrious uncle here puffed again and put his hand to his brow as if to intimate how hard it was for one head to contain them all), "he was loath to add one more to the number. And then (to speak the whole truth), from what I have been able to learn, he is so exasperated, so beside himself, so surfeited with the rascalities of that affair, that he would liefer take satisfaction himself in summary fashion than obtain it by regular methods through the prudence and powerfulness of our right-honorable uncle. I have sought to mollify him;

but, seeing matters take on an uglier look, I have deemed it my duty to warn our most noble uncle, who, after all, is the head and pillar of the house——"

"You would have done still better to speak before."

"True; but I hoped from day to day that the affair would blow over or that the friar would come to his senses, or that he would go away from that monastery, as befalls with these monks, who are here today and elsewhere tomorrow; and then the matter would be at an end. But——"

"Now it shall be my care to apply a remedy."

"So I thought, myself. 'Our illustrious uncle,' said I to myself, 'will be able to prevent a scandal and at the same time save Rodrigo's honor, which is his own honor also. This friar,' thought I, 'is forever harping upon the cord of St. Francis, but to use St. Francis's cord to good purpose, it needs not have it around one's own belly. Our noble uncle possesseth a hundred means unknown to me. The father-provincial hath the greatest deference for him, as 'tis right he should; and, if our noble uncle should think that the best expedient were to give the friar a change of air, he could by a word——' "

"Leave him to do his own thinking whose business it is to think, your lordship," brusquely replied the count.

"Ah! true enough," exclaimed Attilio, shaking his head and grinning at himself for pity. "Am I the man to give counsel to our illustrious uncle? But it is the passion I feel for the honor of our name that maketh me speak. And I am fearful also of having done still another mischief," he added with a pensive air. "I am fearful of having wronged Rodrigo in the estimation of our most noble uncle. I should have no peace were I the occasion of your lordship's thinking that Rodrigo lacks any of that loyalty and submission which are due from him. Let my illustrious uncle rest assured that in this matter it is only——"

"Go to, go to! Little fear of your wronging each other. You will both be friends, till one of you cometh to discretion. Scapegraces, who must forever be getting into trouble and then it is my place to get you out; who—you would make me utter nonsense—who give me more to think about, the pair of you, than"

(and here the reader must imagine what a puff he emitted) "all these blessed matters of state."

After some further expressions of excuse and promise and proffering of compliments, Attilio took his leave and went away, accompanied by his uncle's "Be prudent," which was the count's form of dismissal for his nephews.

Chapter XIX

Were an observer who saw some weed, for instance a fine specimen of dock, growing in a badly tilled field, ambitious to learn whether it came from seed indigenous to that ground or borne thither by the wind or dropped by a bird, ponder as he might, he would never come to a conclusion. So neither can we tell whether it was from the native resources of his own brain or from Attilio's suggestion that the resolution came to the count of using the father-provincial to cut the tangled knot in the most satisfactory fashion. Certain it is that Attilio had not spoken thus by chance, and, though he might very well have expected that the pompous vanity of his uncle would bridle at so overt a hint, he still wished to flash such an expedient before his mind and put his feet on the road he desired him to follow. On the other hand, the expedient agreed so well with the temper of the count and was so plainly indicated by circumstances that one might safely wager his lordship would have discovered it himself without anybody's suggestion.

The question was whether his nephew and namesake should be worsted in a conflict unfortunately but too public—a possibility that vitally concerned the prestige which he tendered so dearly. Whatever satisfaction his relative might take for himself would only be an aggravation of the evil and a fertile cause of trouble and must be prevented at any cost and without loss of time. To command him to leave his villa at this juncture, apart from the fact that his orders would be disobeyed, would be a surrender for his house and a capitulation to the cassock. Warrants, legal force and all such bugbears availed nothing against an adversary like the present. The regular and secular clergy were entirely immune from all lay jurisdiction, not only their persons, but their places of dwelling as well—as must be patent even to one who had read no other history than the

present (God pity him!). All that could be done against such an adversary was to seek his removal, and the means to that end was the father-provincial, with whom rested absolutely the matter of Father Cristoforo's going or staying.

Now, between the father-provincial and the count there existed a long-standing acquaintance. They had seen each other but rarely, it is true, but always with great demonstrations of friendship and copious proffers of service. And moreover, it is better at times to deal with one who has many individuals under him than with one of the subordinates themselves. The latter sees only his own cause, listens only to his own feelings and is concerned only with his own advantage; the former views the case in a multiplicity of bearings, envisages the whole ramification of consequences and interests, foresees a myriad of things to be avoided and of other things to be safeguarded, and he can, accordingly, be approached from a hundred different points.

When the whole problem had been well weighed, the count one day invited the father-provincial to dinner and had him meet a galaxy of guests who had been selected with the refinement of forethought—some of his most betitled kinsmen and others whose family names were titles in themselves, men who by their very bearing, a certain native assurance and aristocratic haughtiness, succeeded without trying, as they talked of the highest matters in the most familiar terms, in creating and every movement reviving the idea of their superiority and power; then, some few pensioners, bound to his house by hereditary dependence or to his person by life-long service, who began at the soup to say "Yes" and by assenting unintermittingly through the meal with mouth, eyes, ears, heads—nay, with their whole body and soul, had, by the time nuts were brought on, reduced a man to the impossibility of pronouncing "No."

At table the count very soon brought the conversation around to the topic of Madrid. All roads lead to Rome, they say; but that day they all led to Madrid. He talked of the court, of the duke, the cabinet ministers, the governor's family, the bull-fights —which he was in a position to describe most accurately, seeing that he had witnessed them from a prominent place in the

Escurial—of which he could give a most minute account, seeing that one of the duke's appointees had taken him through all its nooks and corners. For some time the whole company remained, like the audience in a theatre, listening to him exclusively, then groups broke off into private conversation. Hereupon the count continued his recital of these rare matters, as if in confidence, for the father-provincial, who sat beside him and let him talk on and on and on. But at a certain point the priest gave a turn to the discourse, switched it away from Madrid, and, digressing from court to court and from dignitary to dignitary, at last brought up at Cardinal Barberini, who was a Capuchin and a brother of the reigning pontiff Urban VIII, no less. The count, in turn, had to sit and listen, and was fain to remember that, when all was said, there were more great personages in the world than those on his side. Shortly after, upon rising from table, he begged the father-provincial to accompany him into another chamber.

Two powers were now pitted against each other, grey hairs against grey hairs, ripe experience against ripe experience. His magnificence saw his reverence seated, took a chair in turn, and began: "In view of the friendship that subsists between us, I have deemed it well to speak a word to your paternity of a matter of common interest—one to be despatched between ourselves without resorting to other means, which might— And so, with an open heart and in plain language, I shall tell thee what is the issue, and I am sure that, with a half-dozen words, we shall come to an understanding. Tell me, then, is there in your convent at Pescarenico a Father Cristoforo of —— ?"

The provincial nodded "Yes."

"Tell me, your paternity, frankly now, as friend to friend—Is not this character—this monk—I have no personal acquaintance with the man—with several other Capuchins, yes—sterling religious, zealous, prudent, humble. I have been a friend of the order since childhood. But in every family of somewhat generous dimensions there is always some individual, some unruly son—And this Father Cristoforo I know from certain sources of information to be—well, something of a quarrelsome nature—not

endued with all that prudence and circumspection—I would wager, now, that he hath more than once given your paternity cause for thought."

"I see," meanwhile ruminated the provincial. "He hath taken up the cudgels again. I am to blame. That blessed Cristoforo! I knew he was the sort to be kept moving from pulpit to pulpit and not left six months in one place, especially in the country."

"Oh!" he then said aloud. "It irks me, indeed, to hear that your magnificence holdeth Father Cristoforo in such repute, whereas, from all that I know of him, he is a religious—exemplary at home and held in high esteem abroad."

"I understand perfectly; your paternity must— Still, as a sincere friend, I would fain acquaint thee with a matter which will be useful to know; and, if so be thou art already possessed of the facts, I may, without failing in my respect, set before thee certain—possible consequences— I shall go no further. We know that this Father Cristoforo lent his protection to a man from those parts, a man—your paternity will have heard tell of him—the same who escaped so scandalously from the hands of justice after having perpetrated crimes during that terrible Martinmas sedition, such crimes—crimes that would—Lorenzo Tramaglino."

"Oh! oh! oh!" thought the provincial to himself, but said: "The circumstance is new to me. But your magnificence well knoweth that it is part of our office to go in search of just such transgressors and bring them——"

"Right enough. But transgressors of a certain stamp—! These be ticklish matters, your paternity—delicate subjects to—" And here, instead of blowing out his cheeks and puffing, he compressed his lips and drew in as much air as he was wont to expel at a whiff. He then resumed: "I thought it well to give thee an inkling of the occurrence, because, if his excellency should ever— Some steps might be taken at Rome—I know not—and Rome send thee——"

"I am much beholden to your magnificence for this intelligence, yet am I certain that, if inquiries be instituted, it will be found that Father Cristoforo hath had no dealings with the man

in question beyond bringing him to terms of reason. I know Father Cristoforo."

"Still thou art better aware than I of his character in the world, the little escapades of his youth."

" 'Tis the glory of this habit, my lord count, that a man who hath given cause for gossip in the world becometh another person under its mantle. And, since Father Cristoforo donned this garb——"

"I would fain believe so—I say it from my heart—I would fain believe so. But at times, as the proverb saith—'The cowl maketh not the monk.' "

The proverb did not suit the case exactly, but the count had hurriedly substituted it for another that was on the tip of his tongue: "The wolf changeth his coat but not his life."

"I have proofs," he went on to say, "I have evidence——"

"If thou knowest positively," said the provincial, "that this religious hath committed some fault (we are all liable to err), I would deem it a real favor to be informed of his delinquency. I am his superior—unworthily so, but so I am—for the precise purpose of correcting and remedying."

"I am about to tell thee. In addition to the unpleasant circumstance of this father's overt protection of him thou knowest of, there is another unpleasant matter, which might, perchance—But between ourselves we shall set all to rights at once. It is that this same Father Cristoforo hath taken to baiting my nephew Don Rodrigo——"

"Oh! I am grieved, indeed I am very grieved, that this should be."

"My nephew is young, impetuous, sensible of his rank, unaccustomed to provocation——"

"It shall be my care to inform myself thoroughly of such facts. As I have said to your magnificence—and I speak to a nobleman who hath no less fairness than experience—we are all of flesh and blood, all liable to err—one side as well as another; and, if Father Cristoforo hath failed in——"

"See now, your paternity. These be matters, as I have said, to despatch between ourselves and bury at once—evils which

too much probing only aggravates. Your paternity knoweth what ensues. A mere trifle giveth rise at times to bickering and wrangling which drags on and on like— Attempt to fathom a quarrel, and either you never get to the bottom of it or you start a whole brood of fresh quarrels. Lull to sleep, nip in the bud, most reverend father, that is the method; nip in the bud, lull to sleep. My nephew is young; this religious, from what I hear, still retains all the spirit, all the—inclinations of youth. It, therefore, devolveth upon us, who are ripe with years— Alas! too ripe, eh? most reverend father."

For that instant of time, had one been a spectator of the scene, it was just as when a curtain rises prematurely by some mistake in the midst of a serious opera, and a singer is surprised talking unaffectedly with a companion as if there were never an audience in the world. Everything about the count was natural, as he pronounced that "Alas! too ripe"—look, manner, voice. There was nothing of the diplomat there. It was really true that the number of his years troubled him. Not at all that he regretted the diversions, the fire, the supple grace of youth—that was all frivolous, nonsensical, pitiful! The grounds of his trouble were much more solid and important; he hoped for a certain advancement, when the post should become vacant, and he feared it would be too late. Once that was attained, we can be sure that his years would no longer have given him any concern, but that he would have died content without wishing aught else, just as every one who longs for a particular object protests his willingness to do when the object shall have been finally attained.

But, to let him speak for himself, "It devolveth upon us," he continued, "to have sense for the youngsters and patch up their botching. Happily we are still in time. The matter hath not been noised abroad. A good *principiis obsta* is still in order. Remove the spark from the tinder. A subject who acts amiss, or whose presence occasions unpleasantness in one locality, at times succeeds admirably in another. Your paternity can find just the proper niche for this religious. Incidentally, there is the other circumstance, that he may have incurred the suspicions

of those—who might desire his removal. And so, by placing him in some farish neighborhood, we kill two birds with one stone; the whole difficulty solves itself. Or, to speak more properly, no difficulty exists."

This conclusion is what the father-provincial had been expecting from the very start. "Yes, yes," he thought to himself; "I see your drift. It's the old story. When a poor friar is not to the liking of your clans or giveth umbrage to one of your clansmen, then post-haste, without inquiring whether he be in the right or the wrong, he must be put out of your way."

When the count had concluded and fetched a long puff by way of a full stop, "I understand perfectly," said the provincial, "what my lord count meaneth; but, before taking a step which——"

"It is a step, and not a step, very reverend father. It is a natural occurrence, an ordinary proceeding, and if this precaution be not taken, and that without delay, I foresee a mountain of disorders, a whole Iliad of disasters. Some rash act— Of course, my nephew would never— I am to be reckoned with there— But at the stage which the affair hath now reached, unless we cut the knot ourselves by one clean stroke without loss of time, 'tis impossible that it will remain a secret—and then it will touch not alone my nephew— A hornets' nest is aroused, very reverend father. We comprise a house, you see; we have connections——"

"Most illustrious ones."

"You conceive me—all folk with blood in their veins, all folk whose position in the world is—not inconsiderable. Family pride entereth into the question, it becometh an affair of common interest; and then—even on lovers of peace— It would be a heartrending thing for me to have to—to find myself so placed—me who have always felt so great an attraction to the Capuchin fathers—! To accomplish the good which your fathers are engaged in doing, so much to the edification of the public, they can have naught to do with strife; they need to be at peace, in harmony with such as— Then, again, they have kinsmen in the world, and these nasty family feuds, no matter how little

protracted, spread and ramify and set half the world by the ears. I happen to fill this blessed office, which obligeth me to maintain a certain dignity— His excellency—my compeers—it becometh a common cause—especially in view of that other circumstance. Your paternity knoweth how it is."

"True," said the provincial, "Father Cristoforo is a preacher, and I already had some thought of— I have been asked to— But at this particular time, under such circumstances as these, it might appear a punishment; and to punish before a thorough verification——"

"Not a punishment, no; a measure of prudence, a resort of common expediency, to prevent ominous contingencies— I have made my position plain."

"Between my lord count and me the matter standeth so; I comprehend. But, viewing the facts as they were reported to your magnificence, it is impossible, I think, that something should not have transpired. There be disturbers and mischief-makers the world over, or at least malicious busybodies who take an insane delight in seeing the nobility and the clergy at odds. They pry, they read between the lines, they gossip— Each one hath his own dignity to maintain, and I have besides, as superior (unworthily so), an express duty to fulfil. The honor of our habit—it is not a personal matter—'tis a trust for the which— Your noble nephew, seeing he is as incensed as your magnificence describes him, might take it as a reparation made to himself and—I say not that he would vaunt or triumph, but——"

"Think not so, very reverend father. My nephew is a cavalier who in the world is esteemed according to his station and his dues; but with me he is a boy and will do neither more nor less than my bidding. Moreover, my nephew shall know nothing. What need that we render an account to any one? These be matters that we settle between ourselves like good friends, and with us they must e'en rest. Give it not another thought. I should be well used to keeping my own counsel." Another puff. "As for gossips," he resumed, "what can they say? For a religious to go to another town to preach is an everyday occurrence.

Besides, we who ordain—we who foreordain—we who wield authority—we must make no account of wagging tongues."

"Still, to prevent them from wagging, it were well on this occasion if your nephew made certain demonstrations, gave some public proof of his friendship and esteem—not for us, but for the habit——"

"To be sure, to be sure; that is as it should be—not that there is need. I know that the Capuchins are always received befittingly at my nephew's. He but followeth his inclinations—'tis a family trait; and besides, he knows what pleaseth me. No matter; in the present instance—some extraordinary token—right enough. Leave it to me, very reverend father; I shall order my nephew— That is to say, I shall intimate my behests discreetly, so that he may not divine what hath passed between us, for fear of salving a wound that doth not exist. And, anent the matter we have determined, the sooner the better. And were it some berth a trifle remote—to prevent the least chance——"

"It just falleth out that a preacher is sought for at Rimini, and I might perhaps, without any further reasons, have set my eye on——"

"Most opportune, most opportune. And when——?"

"Since it must be, it shall be soon."

"Soon, soon, very reverend father; better today than tomorrow. And," he continued, as he rose from his seat, "if there be any service which either I or the family can render our good Capuchins——"

"We know the kindness of the house by experience," quoth the father-provincial, rising in turn and following his conqueror towards the door.

"We have snuffed out a spark," said the latter, coming to a halt, "a spark, very reverend father, that might have caused a great conflagration. Between good friends mighty differences are accommodated by a few words."

Upon reaching the door he threw it open and insisted absolutely that the priest should go first. They entered the other chamber and rejoined the rest of the company.

Such a vast deal of thought, of art and of talk did this noble

expend in the prosecution of a single affair, but he obtained corresponding results. In fact, by means of the conversation which we have reported, he succeeded in sending Fra Cristoforo on foot from Pescarenico to Rimini—a fairly long stretch of a walk.

One evening a Capuchin from Milan arrived at Pescarenico with a packet for the father-guardian. Among its contents was an obedience for Father Cristoforo to betake himself to Rimini, where he was to preach the Lenten course. Another letter instructed the guardian to intimate to the said friar that he should put from him all thought of activities which he may have inaugurated in the village from which he was to retire, and that he should maintain no correspondence with its inhabitants.

The bearer of the missive was to be his traveling companion. The guardian remained silent that evening. The next morning he summoned Fra Cristoforo, and, showing him the obedience, he bade him go get his scrip, his staff, his kerchief and girdle and take to the road at once with the reverend companion whom he then introduced.

The reader is left to imagine what a blow it was to the poor friar. Renzo, Lucia and Agnese at once rose up before him, and he exclaimed mentally, so to speak: "My God! my God! what will the poor wretches do when I am gone?" But forthwith he glanced heavenwards and accused himself of lack of confidence, as well as of presumption in deeming himself necessary for anything whatsoever. He crossed his arms on his breast in token of obedience and bowed his head before his superior, who drew him aside and gave him the rest of the message in language of advice whose only interpretation was a command. Fra Cristoforo went to his cell, and, taking his scrip, in which he placed his breviary, his course of sermons and his loaf of grace, he girded up his tunic with a leathern cincture and bade adieu to those of his brethren who were to be found within doors. He then presented himself before the guardian to receive his blessing and together with his companion fared forth in the direction prescribed.

We have said that Don Rodrigo, more than ever bent upon

going through with his handsome undertaking, had resolved to seek the aid of a terrible ally. We can give neither name, surname nor title of the latter, nor even form a conjecture on the subject—a circumstance all the more curious as we find this person commemorated in more than one book (printed books, I mean) of that period. That it was the same person, the similarity of the facts leaves no room to doubt, but we are everywhere confronted with a uniform sedulousness in eschewing his name, as if it must needs scorch the pen—nay, the hand—of the writer. Francesco Rivola, having to speak of him in the "Life of Federigo Borromeo," calls him "a noble no less powerful through his wealth than he was illustrious by birth," and lets it rest at that. Giuseppe Ripamonti, who, in the fifth book of the fifth decade of his *Storia Patria,* treats of the same character more at length, refers to him as "one," "the same," "the beforementioned," "this man," "that person." "I shall relate," he says in his beautiful Latin, which we translate according to our gifts, "the case of one who, ranking second to none of the city's aristocracy, had established his residence in the country not far from the frontier; and there, forging security out of crime, he held at naught processes of law, judges and every tribunal, even the king's sovereignty. He led a life of unrestricted independence, receiving outlaws and outlawed himself for a time, then returning as though naught had occurred." We shall borrow further from this writer, when a passage comes in appositely to corroborate and clarify the narrative of our anonymous author; with which we push dutifully ahead.

To do what the laws proscribed or what force of any description forbade; to play the arbiter and dictator in the affairs of others from no other incentive than the pleasure of commanding; to be feared by all and to impose his behests on those whose behests were usually a law—such had at all times been the chief passions of his soul. From his boyhood upwards he had experienced a mixed sentiment of indignation and impatient envy at the spectacle, or the reported existence, of so many feuds and acts of violence, and the sight of so much petty tyranny. As a youth and while he still resided in the city, he never lost an

opportunity—nay, went out of his way to seek opportunities—of exchanging words with the most celebrated of these ruffians and traversing their plans, to measure his strength against theirs and either put a curb on their power or bring them to sue for his friendship. Superior to the majority in wealth and following, and to all, perhaps, in audacity and perseverance, he utterly quashed the pretensions of some of his rivals, gave many more a drastic lesson, and admitted a number to his friendship—not by any means as equals, but on the sole footing that agreed with his humor—a kind of subordinate friends, who would be content to acknowledge their inferiority and sit at his left.

It was he himself, however, whom the event proved to be the slave and catspaw of his vassals. They failed not in their different undertakings to claim the aid of so puissant a helper, and for him to refuse battle would have meant loss of caste and recreancy to his pretensions. So it fell out that, between his own quarrels and those of others, he perpetrated so many enormities that neither his name nor his family, the influence of friends nor his own audacity, availed to buckler him against the ban of the law and the animosity of such powerful enemies, and he had to bow to circumstances and withdraw from the state. I believe this is the context to which belongs a remarkable incident reported by Ripamonti. "Once, when this noble had to quit the country, the secrecy he observed, the respectfulness and timidity he evinced, were of the following order: He traversed the city on horseback followed by a pack of hounds and heralded by the blare of trumpets, and, in passing before the palace, he left an insolent message for the governor with the sentries."

During his absence he did not interrupt his dealings nor suspend communications with such friends as were comprehended under that name. They remained united with him, to translate Ripamonti literally, "in a secret league of atrocious counsels and murderous offices." It would even appear that he at that time entered into certain new and frightful relations with persons of still more exalted rank, whom the historian cited above describes with mysterious brevity. "Even foreign princes," he says, "more than once availed themselves of his services for some important

homicide, and they frequently had to send him reenforcements from afar to act under his command."

At length (how much later, it is not known), either because the ban was raised through some powerful intercessor, or because his audacity stood him in the stead of impunity, he resolved to return home, and did return in fact—not to Milan, however, but to a castle adjoining Bergamask territory, which, as every one knows, was then a Venetian dependency. "This castle" (I still quote Ripamonti) "was, as it were, a laboratory of bloody edicts. It was manned by servants whose own heads carried a price and whose trade was to cut off the heads of others. Neither cook nor scullion was exempt from the shedding of blood. The hands of mere boys were imbrued in gore." Besides this fine family at home, he had, as the historian asserts, another cohort of similar characters scattered, as if in military posts, here and there throughout the two states on whose confines he lived.

All the petty tyrants within a fair radius of the surrounding country had been constrained, some on one occasion, some on another, to choose between the friendship and the enmity of this tyrant extraordinary. But the first to attempt resistance had fared so badly at his hands that no one aspired thereafter to enter the lists. That is not to say that standing thus aloof and attending to their own business meant independence. His herald would arrive with an injunction to forego a certain undertaking, to cease molesting such and such a debtor, or some similar message; and then one must answer "Yes" or "No." When one side had gone to pledge him fealty and placed an affair in his hands, the other side found itself in the hard alternative either of bowing to his sentence or setting up for an enemy—which amounted to being, as the phrase once ran, in the last stages of consumption.

Many had recourse to him with wrongs to be righted; many more, having obtained an advantage, hastened to pre-empt the favor of so powerful a patron and bar the way to their adversary, the one class as well as the other thus becoming his more complete dependents. It chanced at times that some helpless victim of oppression fled to him from the vexations of his persecutor.

Then, taking the part of the weak, he would force the oppressor to desist, to repair the wrong already done and demand pardon; or, if the latter remained refractory, his chastiser would wage such a war that the other was fain to quit the scene of his depredations or to pay a more prompt and terrible penalty still. In such cases the name so feared and so abhorred was pronounced for the moment with blessing, because this measure, I do not say of justice, but of relief and compensation, such as they were, could not have been looked for at that period from any other power either public or private. Oftener—nay, ordinarily—his strength ministered to wicked passions, atrocious retaliations and the caprices of pride. But these very different uses of his power never produced but one same effect, that of impressing the minds of all with what he was capable of daring and achieving in defiance of either justice or injustice—those two agencies which obstruct the will of man so extensively and so often force him to turn back.

The fame of ordinary tyrants was for the most part restricted to the areas within which their wealth and strength were paramount. Each district had its own, and they resembled one another so nearly that there was no particular reason for folk to concern themselves about such as did not constitute a menace for them. But the fame of our tyrant had long since spread to every corner of the Milanese. Everywhere his life was the subject of popular tales, and his name carried with it something compelling, weird and fabulous. The suspicion that his colleagues and assassins were ubiquitous helped in its turn to make his memory ubiquitous. They were only suspicions (since who would openly avow such affiliations?), but every petty tyrant might be his colleague and every blackguard his assassin, and this very uncertainty rendered more boundless the conception and more profound the terror of the reality itself. Whenever a locality saw bravos of unfamiliar and particularly ill-favored lineaments put in an appearance, or whenever an enormity was committed whose author could not be immediately determined nor guessed, people uttered with bated breath the name of him

whom we, thanks to the precious circumspection of our authorities, shall be constrained to call the Un-named.[1]

From his ill-famed castle to the mansion of Don Rodrigo was a distance of not more than seven miles, and no sooner had the latter become the master and tyrant of his appanage than he perceived that he must either come to grips or else to peaceful terms with the other. He had, accordingly, proffered his friendship and been accepted—on the same terms as all the rest, be it understood. In return for more than one service (our manuscript is not more explicit on the subject) which he had already rendered to his suzerain, the latter never failed to send him back with promises of assistance in any juncture whatsoever. Don Rodrigo was very careful, however, to cultivate this friendship only surreptitiously, or, at least, to hide the real closeness and nature of the alliance. He wished to play the tyrant, to be sure, but without breaking with civilization. The profession was with him a means, not an end. He wished to live unhampered in the city and enjoy the comforts, the diversions and honors of society. This demanded that he observe certain restrictions, reckon with relatives, cultivate the friendship of lofty personages, and keep one hand on the scales of justice, to incline them in his favor at need, smuggle them away or, on certain given occasions, to bang some one on the head with them, when this served his turn better than the weapons of private violence.

Now, his intimacy, or, to be more accurate, his collusion, with a man such as we have described, an open enemy of legal institutions, would not have proved a recommendation for such favors, especially with the count, his uncle. The few traces of such a friendship which it still remained impossible to conceal might, however, pass for indispensable relations with a man whose enmity was too formidable to brave, and be accordingly

[1] [In a letter to Cesare Cantù, Manzoni acknowledges that "the Un-named is certainly Bernardino Visconti. By an exercise of the *aequa potestas quidquid agendi*," he adds, "I have transported his castle into the Valsassina. The Duchess Visconti complains that I have lugged into her house a great rascal—but also a great saint." Epistolario di A. Manzoni, Carrara, Milan, vol. I, page 461.—TRANSLATOR.]

excused on the score of necessity; because those who set up for guardians and lack either the will or the means to fulfil their obligations, consent, in the long run, to their protégés, shifting for themselves up to a certain point. At least, if they do not consent, they connive at it.

One morning Don Rodrigo rode forth on horseback, accoutred as for the chase and attended by a small retinue of bravos on foot, Griso at the stirrup and four others bringing up the rear, and bent his course towards the castle of the Un-named.

Chapter XX

The castle of the Un-named was perched over a narrow and dismal valley on the summit of a peak that projected out from a rugged chain of mountains, whether united to them or separated from them it is difficult to say, by a network of crags and ledges and a labyrinth of chasms and caverns which clutter up the gorge behind and on either flank of the eminence. The sole possibility of access is from the side facing the valley, a rather steep incline, it is true, but even and continuous, with uplands of meadow, and cultivated fields farther down, dotted here and there with cottages. The floor itself of the glen is a bed of stones over which, according to the season, flows a rill or a brawling torrent. It then served as the boundary-line of the two states. The opposite ridge, which forms, so to speak, the other wall of the valley, also has a fringe of cultivation on its lower slopes; the rest is splintered rock and cobble-stones, steep acclivities, untraversed by roads, and, with the exception of a stray tuft of herbage in a cleft or on a ledge, bare of vegetation.

From the heights of this unhallowed castle, like an eagle from its blood-stained aerie, the lawless noble could look all around wherever the foot of man might tread, but above him never mortal breathed or moved. With one sweep of the eye he could survey the whole enclosure, mountain slopes, valley and the roads which led through it. To the eye of a beholder from this vantage point that which twisted its tortuous way up to the terrible abode of the outlaw unrolled itself like the folds of a ribbon. From casement or embrasure the noble occupant could leisurely count the steps of the approaching traveler and a hundred times over make him his target. Even were it a large company, he could with such a garrison have stretched a few by the way or sent them rolling down to the bottom ere one could reach the top. Besides, to say naught of the summit, none durst set foot

even in the valley or its approaches without enjoying the full countenance of the chatelain; and the agent of the law who showed his face would have received the same treatment as a spy apprehended in a hostile camp. They told tragic tales of the last to make such a venture, but these tales were now old, and none of the younger generation remembered to have seen a single representative of that race of beings in the valley, dead or alive.

Such is the description our anonymous author gives of the place. Of its name, not a hint. Nay, not to furnish us with a clue towards finding it, he passes over Don Rodrigo's journey in silence, transporting him straightway into the midst of the valley and setting him down at the foot of the eminence itself, just where the winding path begins its steep ascent. Here there was a tavern, which could also have been denominated an outpost. An old sign, bearing a blazing sun painted on each of its sides, hung over the entrance, but the public mouth, which sometimes repeats the names it is taught to say and sometimes makes them over after its own fashion, called this tavern by no other appellation than the "Malanotte."[1]

At the sound of the approaching horsemen there appeared on the threshold an uncouth stripling armed like a Saracen. He took one look, and returned within to convey his information to a trio of ruffians who sat gaming with a pack of singularly dirty and crumpled cards. He who appeared to be the leader arose, stationed himself at the doorway, and, recognizing a friend of the master's, saluted him respectfully. Don Rodrigo, having returned the greeting with much civility, inquired whether the lord of the castle were at home, and, upon receiving the varlet's assurance that he believed such to be the case, he dismounted and threw the reins to Tiradritto, one of his retinue. He then unslung his musket and consigned it to Montanarolo—as if to disburden himself of a useless weight and climb more briskly, but, in reality, because he well knew that it was not allowed to ascend those heights with firearms. He drew from his pocket a few *berlinghe,* and giving them to Tanabuso, "Tarry here," he said, "and bide my return. Make merry meanwhile with these

[1] [i.e. "The Baleful Night."—TRANSLATOR.]

worthy fellows." He next extracted several gold *florins* and handed them to the corporal, half for himself, half for his squad. Finally, in company with Griso, who also had laid aside his piece, he began the ascent on foot. Meanwhile, the three aforesaid bravos and a fourth by name of Squinternotto (fine appellatives, to be preserved for us so carefully!) remained playing, carousing and bandying exploits with the three retainers of the Un-named and the young gallows-bird of whom we have made mention.

Shortly after another bravo of the Un-named, also on his way up the mountain, overtook Don Rodrigo, and, recognizing him at a glance, accompanied him to the top, thus sparing him the annoyance of telling his name and rendering a new account of himself at every meeting with such as did not know who he was. Being come to the castle and admitted (Griso, however, was left standing at the door), he was ushered through a labyrinth of dark passages and sundry chambers tapestried with muskets, falchions and partizans and guarded in every instance by a bravo, and after some wait was admitted to the presence of the Un-named.

The latter advanced to meet him, returning his salute and at the same time bestowing a look at his hands and his face, as he was wont to do from force of habit, and now almost involuntarily, to whoever came to see him, even were they his oldest and best-tried friends. He was a tall man, swarthy of complexion and bald. What few hairs still remained to him were white, and his face was wrinkled. At first glance one would have given him more than his sixty years, but his bearing, his movements, the animation of his strongly defined features and the sinister but piercing flash of his eye, bespoke a strength of body and vigor of mind which would have been remarkable in a youth.

Don Rodrigo said that he had come for advice and assistance; that, finding himself involved in a knotty undertaking from which his honor did not permit him to withdraw, he had bethought himself of the promises of one who never promised more than he could perform. And he proceeded to narrate his impious perplexities. The Un-named, who already knew somewhat of

the case, but in a vague way, listened with attention to the story, both from curiosity for such tales in general and from hatred of a well-known name that was linked with this one in particular —that of Fra Cristoforo, the open enemy of all tyrants in word and, when it was possible, in deed. Don Rodrigo, knowing his man, began to exaggerate the difficulties of the undertaking; the remoteness of the place; the barrier of the cloister; her ladyship —At this the Un-named, as if a demon lurking in his breast had given the command, interrupted his suitor, saying that he accepted the engagement. He made a note of poor Lucia's name and dismissed Don Rodrigo, saying that he would shortly be apprised what he must do.

Should the reader recollect the profligate Egidio, who dwelt next the convent which sheltered Lucia, let him now understand that this ribald was one of the Un-named's closest and most intimate partners in crime. That was why the latter had pledged himself so promptly and so decidedly. But scarcely was he alone when he felt the qualms, not of repentance, but of vexation, for the move he had just made. For some time past his sinful courses had been, it would be too much to say, inspiring him with remorse, but at least had begun to pall on him. The ghosts of those countless crimes which had gone on accumulating not so much in his conscience as in his memory rose up before him every time he added to their number, and, as they presented themselves to his mind in all their ugliness and multiplicity, he felt the weight, which before had been merely uncomfortable, grow more and more crushing. A kind of loathing which, after attending his first experiences in wrong-doing had been overborne and practically suppressed, was now returning to importune him. But whereas, in his earlier years, the prospect of a long, indeterminate future and the consciousness of his overflowing vitality had filled his soul with reckless confidence, now, on the contrary, the thought of the future was what made the past all the more hateful. To grow old, to die—What then? And strange to say, the fancied apparition of death, which, in the moment of peril, with the enemy confronting him, had been wont to redouble the fighting spirit of the man and to pour into

his soul all the courage of wrath—that same apparition, stalking through his castle stronghold in the stillness of the night, threw him into instant consternation. This was not the threat of death from a mortal like himself; his superior strength of equipment or readiness of hand was of no avail against it. It was coming alone; its source was from within. As yet it was, perhaps, afar off, but each moment brought it one step nearer, and even while he was struggling painfully to elude the thought of it, the reality itself was approaching.

At the beginning of his career the frequent object-lessons and, in fact, the daily contemplation of violence, blood-feuds and murder, while they stimulated him to emulate the ferocity of others, also furnished him with a kind of counter-authority against the dictates of his conscience; but now the vague but terrifying idea of individual accountability, of sanctions entirely independent of the example of others, was reasserting itself in his mind, while the sense of solitariness, now that he had outstripped the ruck of common malefactors and occupied a pre-eminence of his own, at times became oppressive. That God of Whom he had heard but Whose existence or non-existence had for a long time been a matter of equal indifference, occupied as he was solely in living as if He existed not, now, in certain moods of causeless terror and gratuitous dejection, seemed to cry out within him: Still I am. The law which in the first flush of his passions he had heard proclaimed, if no more, as God's ordinance and which now only irritated him, as it recurred unbidden to his mind, represented itself to his reason, in spite of all he could do, as incapable of frustration. But far from revealing this new source of uneasiness to others, he thrust it down into the remotest recesses of his consciousness and cloaked it over with an exterior of greater ferocity, and by such expedients he sought to shut it out of his thoughts or stifle it. Envying the times (since annihilate or forget them he could not) when he had been wont to work iniquity undisturbed by remorse, preoccupied as he had been solely about the success of his object, he was now putting forth every effort to recall them; and to this end he sought to retain or to attract once again his former strength of will, think-

ing by unabated resoluteness, audacity and defiance of danger to prove himself the unwasted contemporary of his prime.

Thus, on the present occasion, he had hurriedly pledged his word to Don Rodrigo, thinking to bar the way to all hesitancy. But no sooner had the other taken his departure than, feeling the resolution he had summoned to assist him in promising ooze away and finding his mind beset with thoughts which tempted him to default, and which would, in fact, have led him to disregard appearances with a friend or inferior accomplice, to cut short the painful conflict he summoned Nibbio, one of the cleverest and most daring agents of his enormities and his ordinary go-between with Egidio. With an air of firmness he commanded him to take to the saddle forthwith and go straightway to Monza, where he was to inform Egidio of the engagement he had contracted and request his aid in fulfilling it.

The graceless messenger returned sooner than his master had expected with Egidio's reply. The undertaking was easy of execution and sure of success. A coach was to be sent him at once with two or three bravos well disguised. He would see to all the rest and engineer its development. At this announcement the Un-named, however he may have been affected interiorly, hurriedly enjoined Nibbio himself to arrange all according to Egidio's instructions and to set out with two more, whom he designated, on the expedition.

If Egidio had had to reckon on his ordinary resources to perform the horrible service which had been requested, he certainly would not have been so prompt and so categorical in his promises. But in that same sanctuary where everything seemed an impediment to success, the godless youth commanded a resource known to him alone; the circumstance which to all others would have been fraught with the highest difficulties was to him a key that fitted perfectly. We have related that the unfortunate nun once gave ear to his addresses, and the reader may have surmised that that time was not the last—was, in fact, only the first step in a career of profligacy and blood. That same voice which had acquired weight—I might almost say absolute authority—through

crime, now imposed the sacrifice of the innocence she was guarding.

Gertrude was appalled at the proposal. To lose Lucia through an unforeseen chance and without any personal fault would have seemed a misfortune and a bitter retribution, and now she was commanded to accomplish the separation with impious perfidy and to exchange this measure of atonement for fresh remorse. The unhappy wretch tried every way of eluding the horrid injunction—every one except that which alone was the safe way and which never ceased to lie open before her. Sin is an exacting, inexorable master, who emancipates from his yoke only those that rebel unreservedly. This Gertrude could not bring herself to do, and so she obeyed the demand.

It was the day agreed upon. The stipulated hour was approaching. Gertrude, alone with Lucia in her private parlor, was multiplying her endearments, which Lucia accepted and reciprocated with increasing tenderness—not unlike the sheep, trembling through no impulse of fear under the hand of the shepherd who fondles it with gentle strokes, and turning to lick the hand that caresses it, unaware that just outside the pen waits the butcher, to whom the shepherd sold it a moment before.

"I have need of an important service, and thou alone canst perform it for me. There be a plenty to do my bidding, but of such as I can trust, not one. On a matter of great consequence, which thou shalt be told of anon, I must speak straightway with that same father-guardian of the Capuchins who brought thee hither, poor lass! but it is equally necessary that none should know I have sent thee to summon him. I have no one but thee to discharge this embassy secretly."

Lucia was affrighted at such a request, and, with her wonted timidity but without concealing her astonishment, she adduced in excuse the various reasons which her ladyship should have comprehended, should, in fact, have foreseen without any representations—the absence of her mother, or, indeed, of any companion, the loneliness of the road, her ignorance of the place. But Gertrude, trained as she was in an infernal school, evinced so much astonishment in her turn and so great a displeasure at

meeting this unreadiness in the person on whom she thought she could have built greater expectations, and pretended to find the alleged excuses so flimsy (Was it not broad daylight? Was it not only a stone's throw? Had she not traveled the road a few days previously? Even though she had never laid eyes on it, how could she mistake the directions, once she was told?), that her poor victim, moved at the same time to tears and resentment, blurted out: "Very well; what must I do?"

"Go to the Capuchin monastery." She described the way anew. "Call for the father-guardian and tell him in private to come to me out of hand, but not to divulge to any one that it is I who summoned him."

"But what shall I say to the portress, who hath never seen me go out and will inquire whither I am bound?"

"Try to pass unnoticed; and, if it turneth out otherwise, say that thou goest to such and such a church, where thou hast promised to say a prayer."

This was a fresh difficulty for the forlorn damsel—to tell a lie. But her ladyship feigned anew to be so hurt at these repulses and made it appear so base thus to put a vain scruple ahead of gratitude that Lucia, dismayed rather than convinced, and, above all, more heart-broken than ever, replied: "Very well, I will go. God help me," and started off.

When Gertrude, who from the grille followed her with hard, wide-staring eyes, saw her set foot on the threshold, as if overpowered by an irresistible impulse, she opened her lips and called: "Hold! Lucia!"

The latter turned and walked back to the grille. But already another impulse, an impulse wont to prevail, had conquered anew in Gertrude's ill-fated breast. Pretending to be dissatisfied with the instructions she had already given, she again explained to Lucia the way she should take and dismissed her, saying: "Do all as I have said, and come back quickly." Lucia set out.

She passed the cloister door unobserved and fared forth with downcast eyes, shrinking close to the wall. With the aid of the directions she had received and of her own recollections she found the gate leading out of town and, with a trembling heart, and all

her faculties bent inwards, she took to the highway and arrived briefly at the road leading to the monastery. This road was, and still is, sunk like the bed of a stream between high banks bordered with copsewood with over-arching boughs. Upon entering it and seeing it entirely deserted, Lucia felt her fear increase and hastened her steps; but presently she breathed somewhat more freely upon observing a coach standing still and, beside it, just opposite the open door, two travelers, looking from right to left as if uncertain of their way. Upon drawing closer she heard one of the pair say: "Here cometh a good lass who will point out the road." In fact, when she had come up to the carriage, this same man, with an air of greater courtesy than one would have augured, turned and said: "Fair maid, couldst thou show us the road to Monza?"

"You are going the wrong way thus," replied the unfortunate girl. "Monza lieth in this direction—" And she was turning to point with her finger, when the man's companion (it was Nibbio), seizing her suddenly by the waist, lifted her off her feet. Lucia turned her head around in terror and shrieked. The villain thrust her into the carriage. Another, who was sitting on the forward seat, seized her, and in spite of her outcries and struggles, forced her into the seat opposite. A third binding a handkerchief over her mouth, bottled up her screams in her throat. Meanwhile Nibbio jumped in also, the door was closed, and the coach bounded off. The other, who had put the treacherous question, remained behind on the road, glancing around to see whether any one had heard Lucia's screams. Not a soul was in sight. He drew himself up the bank by the aid of a sapling and disappeared in the coppice. This was a ruffian of Egidio's. From his master's doorstep he had been keeping a lookout on the convent for the moment of Lucia's departure, had observed her well so as to be able to recognize her again, and had then scampered off by a short-cut to wait for her at the designated place.

Who can now describe the terror and anguish of the latter or express what passed in her soul? In her anxiety to know her awful situation she would open wide her terror-strained eyes and

then close them again in abhorrence and fright at the sinister visages that confronted her gaze. She writhed, but was held fast on every side. Collecting all her forces, she would then jerk and tug in an effort to reach the door, but a brawny pair of arms pinned her fast to the floor, where four more talon-like hands held her as in a vise. Every time she opened her mouth to scream the kerchief stifled the sound in her throat. Meanwhile three hellish voices, in the most humane accents they could assume, continued to repeat: "Peace, peace; have no fear; we shall do thee no scathe." After some moments of this agonizing struggle she seemed to grow quiet. Her arms relaxed, her head fell back and it was only with difficulty she kept the lids from drooping over her staring eyes. The horrid faces before her swam confusedly in a grotesque phantasmagory, the color fled from her countenance, and a cold sweat covered her body. Then she succumbed and fainted.

"Come, come; courage!" Nibbio was saying. "Courage, courage!" echoed his two scoundrelly companions. But the suspension of every faculty preserved Lucia at that moment from hearing the reassuring messages of these three horrid voices.

"The devil! she seemeth dead," said one of the three. "If she were dead, of a truth!"

"Ho! dead!" quoth the other. "'Tis one of those swooning fits that women are prone to. Well I know that whenever I would send some one a-packing to the other world, it hath craved more than this, be they man or woman."

"Go to!" said Nibbio. "Your minds to your task, and eschew what is beyond it. Forth from the drawer with the harquebuses and keep them in readiness; there be always rapscallions roosting in this greenwood we are now entering. 'Sdeath! Not thus in your laps. Put them behind you, there on the seat. Do you not see that she is a ninny that will faint for a mere nothing? If she seeth firearms, she is like to die in good sooth. And, when she reviveth, take care not to frighten her. Hands off, unless I give you a signal; I can hold her by myself. And see you hold your tongues; leave the talking to me."

Meanwhile the coach, flying with undiminished speed, had plunged into the depths of the wood.

After a period Lucia began to awaken as if from a profound and distressing sleep and opened her eyes. She was at pains for some moments to distinguish the fearful objects which surrounded her and to collect her thoughts. At length she realized anew her terrible position. The first use she made of her little remaining strength was to make another lunge at the door in an effort to fling herself out; but she was withheld, and succeeded only in catching a glimpse of the lonely wild through which they were passing. She shrieked once again; but Nibbio, raising up the hand that held the kerchief, "Come," he said in the softest tones he could muster, "hold thy peace, and thou wilt be the better off. We wish to do thee no harm; only, if thou dost not hush thy outcries, we must use constraint."

"Let me go away! Who are ye, and whither are ye conducting me? Why have ye made me a prisoner? Let me go; ah! let me go away!"

"I tell thee to have never a fear. Thou shouldst comprehend, not being a child, that we mean thee no harm. Seest thou not that we might have murdered thee a hundred times over, had our intentions been evil? Therefore be at ease."

"Nay, nay; let me go my own ways. I know you not!"

"But we know thee."

"Oh, Mother of God! How do ye know me? Ah! let me go, I beseech you. Who are ye, and why have ye seized me thus?"

"Because we were so commanded."

"Oh! who? who could have given such a command?"

"Silence!" said Nibbio with a frown. "These questions must not be put to us."

Lucia attempted still again to hurl herself suddenly at the door; but, seeing it was to no purpose, she again betook herself to prayers. Bowing her head and clasping her hands before her face, with a voice broken by sobs and tears coursing down her cheeks, "Oh!" she pleaded, "in the name of God and the thrice-holy Virgin, set me free. What wrong have I done you? I am a poor helpless body that never harmed you in aught. That

which you have done to me I forgive from my heart, and shall pray God for you always. If you have ever a daughter, wife or mother of your own, think what they would suffer were they in my case. Bethink you that we must all die, and that you will one day wish God to deal mercifully by you. Let me depart; leave me here; the Lord will lead me."

"We cannot."

"Ye cannot? God have mercy! Why can ye not? Whither would you conduct me? Why——"

"It skills nothing; we cannot. Have no fear. We mean thee no harm. Remain quiet, and no one shall touch thee."

Distraught with grief and preyed upon by worry and alarm more than ever at finding her words prove futile, Lucia turned to Him Who holds in His hand the hearts of men and can, when He chooses, soften the very hardest. She shrank into the farthest corner of the carriage, and, crossing her hands on her breast, prayed for some time in silence. Then, drawing forth the rosary, she told her beads with greater faith and fervor than she had ever before brought to the task in her whole life. At brief intervals, hoping to have gained the mercy she was imploring, she addressed her supplications anew to her captors—all in vain. Then she would swoon away again and awaken anew to consciousness and fresh anguish. But our heart recoils from drawing out her torture at greater length. A too painful pity hurries us along to the end of this journey, which lasted upward of four hours, and in the train of which follow other agonizing hours which we must still spend. Let us transport ourselves at once to the castle where the poor wretch was awaited.

The Un-named was waiting with an uneasiness and anxiety to which he was unaccustomed. Strange to relate, this man who had disposed of so many lives in cold blood and who, in the long series of deeds committed by him, had recked not of the suffering he caused, save at times to glut his savage vengeance with the spectacle, now, in laying hands upon this unknown and obscure peasant-girl, was filled with compunction and almost terror. From a lofty window of his grim mansion he had for some time been gazing towards one of the defiles leading into the valley.

Now he saw the coach appear and crawl slowly forward; because their first mad career had exhausted the fire and subdued the strength of the horses, and although, from the point where he stood watching, it seemed no larger than a child's toy, he recognized it immediately and felt his heart beat faster.

"Is she there?" he thought forthwith. Then he continued to muse: "How she weighs upon me! Let us be rid of her."

And he would have called one of his ruffians and sent him to head off the carriage and order Nibbio to turn around and conduct the charge to Don Rodrigo's palace. But an imperious "No," ringing in his ear, banished such a plan. Tormented, however, by the need of giving some orders, when it became intolerable to stand there any longer idly waiting for that coach, which, as it drew almost insensibly nearer, seemed like the stealthy approach of treason or retribution, he summoned an old beldame of his household.

The latter was the daughter of a former custodian of the castle. She had been born and had passed her whole life within its precincts. All that she had seen and heard from the cradle up had created in her mind an impressive and terrible concept of the power of her masters, and the chief maxims she had derived from example no less than from instruction was that they must be obeyed in all, for they could do one great harm or much good. The idea of duty, deposited like a seed in the hearts of all men, developed in hers apace with the sentiments of servile respect, terror and cupidity, became associated with them, merged in them. When the Un-named, having become master, began to turn his power to such dreadful uses, she at first experienced a revulsion, together with a still deeper sentiment of submission. With time she grew accustomed to what was never absent from her eyes or her ears, and the strong, licentious will of so great a nobleman became for her a sort of law in itself.

On reaching maidenhood she had espoused a servant of the house, who in the course of a hazardous mission shortly after left his carcass to the vultures and her a widow. The bloody redress which the noble promptly exacted afforded her ferocious consolation and enhanced the pride she already felt in being under

such a protector. Thenceforward she set foot outside the castle only at rarest intervals, and little by little all ideas of a life different from what was led around her vanished from her memory. No particular duty was assigned her, but, much to her vexation, now one, now another, of her liege's gang of blackguards gave her occupation—patching their rags, preparing hurried meals on their return from some expedition or salving their wounds. In requital, their commands, their thanks and their reprimands were spiced with derision and contumely. "Hag" was her ordinary title, the qualifying adjunct, which none ever omitted, varying according to the circumstances and temper of her interlocutor. And she, her sloth once disturbed and her wrath provoked (her two ruling passions), at times paid back these compliments in terms which Satan would have found more instinct with his genius than those of her tormentors.

"Thou seest the coach below there!" said the master to her.

"I see it," replied the hag, thrusting forward her pointed chin and straining her eyes as if they would start from their cavernous sockets.

"Have them prepare a litter and take thee to the Malanotte out of hand. Quick; so that thou reach it before yon carriage, that crawleth along at a snail's pace. There is—there should be a damsel inside. If she be there in truth, bid Nibbio in my name to place her in the litter and then take himself hither incontinently. Thou shalt remain in the litter with the girl, and when you are come to the top, conduct her to thy chamber. Should she ask where thou takest her or whose the castle is, take care not to——"

"Ugh!" quoth the hag.

"But," continued the Un-named, "see thou cheer her."

"What must I say?"

"What must you say? Cheer her, I tell thee. Art thou come to thy years without knowing how to cheer a fellow-creature at need? Hast never been faint at heart? Hast never known fear? Knowest thou not the words that soothe in such moments? Use such words now. Find them, with a wanion! Begone!"

When she had departed, he paused for a time at the window,

his eyes resting on the carriage, which now loomed much larger. He then raised them to the sun, which was just sinking behind the mountain, and, higher up, to the dark cloud-wracks that turned of a sudden to molten gold. Closing the window, he withdrew, and began to pace back and forth through the apartment with the hurried strides of a traveler.

Chapter XXI

The beldame had hastened to obey her orders and issue others in turn under the authority of that name which, by whomsoever pronounced in that place, made every one jump, since it entered nobody's head that any one could be daring enough to use it fraudulently. The event found her at the Malanotte a little before the coach arrived. Seeing it approach, she stepped from the litter, and, beckoning the driver to halt, she advanced to the door. To Nibbio, who thrust out his head, she communicated the master's orders in an undertone.

Lucia roused herself at the stopping of the carriage and awoke as from a kind of lethargy. She felt her pulse begin to race again and watched, with gaping mouth and eyes opened wide. Nibbio had drawn back, and the old woman, with her chin resting on the door, stared at Lucia, saying meantime: "Come, my good lass. Come, pet; come with me, who have orders to cheer thee and treat thee handsomely."

At the sound of a female voice Lucia experienced a moment of comfort and reassurance, but immediately after she relapsed into more profound terror.

"Who are you?" she tremulously inquired, fastening her horrified eyes upon the beldame's face.

"Come, come, my chuck," the latter continued to patter. Nibbio and his two companions, inferring from the remarkably subdued language and softened accents of the aged vixen what the noble's intentions were, sought by fair words to persuade their captive to obey. But she continued to gaze out through the door, and, though the wildness and strangeness of the place and the security of her guardians permitted her to entertain no hope of succor, she nevertheless opened her lips to scream. Nibbio looked significantly at the gag, and she repressed her outcries, and, trembling and writhing, she was taken and placed in the

litter. The beldame followed her. Nibbio bade the two other scoundrels walk behind, and he addressed himself without further ado to the climb, to hasten to the master's summons.

"Who are you?" Lucia anxiously asked the unknown and ill-favored woman beside her. "Why am I with you? Where am I, and whither are you taking me?"

"To one who wisheth to benefit thee," replied the ancient dame, "to a great— Happy they whom he wishes to favor. Well for thee, well for thee, well for thee. Have no fear. Be merry; he himself commanded me to cheer you. You will tell him, eh? You will tell him that I cheered you?"

"Who is he, and why—what would he have of me? I am none of his. Tell me where I am and let me go. Tell those behind to let me go and conduct me to some church. Oh! you, who are a woman, in the name of the Virgin Mary. . . ."

This sweet and hallowed name, devoutly repeated in her earliest years, and now for so long a time uninvoked, and perchance unheard, produced in the mind of the unhappy wretch who heard it at this juncture a confused and mysterious sensation, dim as the reminiscence of light in an aged man who has been blind since infancy.

Meanwhile the Un-named, standing at the castle-gate, looked down and saw the litter crawling along like the carriage in the first instance, and ahead of it at an ever-growing distance Nibbio climbing the ascent at break-neck speed. When he had reached the summit, the nobleman beckoned him to follow and ushered him into an apartment of the castle.

"Well?" quoth he, coming to a halt.

"Never a hitch," replied Nibbio, bowing. "Instructions delivered, the woman on the dot, no onlookers, just one scream that attracted nobody, the driver prompt, the horses splendid, the road clear; but. . . ."

"But what?"

"I shall speak sooth. I had liefer my orders had been to put a musket-ball through her back without seeing her face or hearing her talk."

"Tush, tush! What mean you?"

"I mean that during the whole live-long time—She moved me to pity."

"Pity! What knowest thou of pity? What is pity?"

"I never understood so well before. It's with pity well-nigh the same story as with fear; once let it take hold of you, and you are unmanned."

"Let us hear somewhat of how she succeeded in moving thee to pity."

"O illustrious master! it hath been an age—! Such weeping, such praying, such piteous eyes, such a pallor of death! Then more sobbing and praying, and a manner of speech that——"

"I'll have none of her here," meanwhile ruminated the Unnamed. "I have been a dolt to pledge myself; but my word is given, my word is given. When she is far away—" And, raising his head to Nibbio in an attitude of command, "Now," he said, "lay aside thy pity and take to the saddle. Select a companion—two if you list—and ride post-haste to the house of that Don Rodrigo you know of. Tell him to send—but send in a trice, because otherwise——"

But another "No," more imperious than the first, forbade him interiorly to finish. "No," he exclaimed resolutely, as if to promulgate the command of that small voice within; "no, go to rest, and tomorrow morning—thou shalt do what I bid thee."

"She must have a demon of her own," he then soliloquized, standing with his arms folded on his breast and his gaze riveted upon a section of the floor where the moonbeams, streaming through a lofty window, cast a pale square of light, checkered by the shadows of the heavy iron grating and the finer fretwork of the glazier's leading—"a demon or a protecting angel. Nibbio compassionate! She shall quit my roof the first thing tomorrow, let whatever fate overtake her that may. Then a truce to all talk of her, and," he continued in the same frame of mind with which one commands a disobedient child to do something we know he will not do, "a truce to all thought of her. But let that lout of a Don Rodrigo not come pestering me with his thanks, because—I wish never to hear of her more. I did him the service, because—because I promised; and I promised, be-

cause—it is my fate. But he shall repay me well. Let us see, now. . . ."

He would fain have ransacked his brain then and there for some exorbitant demand to make by way of compensation, and almost of penalty; but again the words "Nibbio compassionate!" welled up in his brain. "How can she have acted!" he continued, fascinated by the thought. "I'll see her—No—Yes, I will."

He passed from apartment to apartment till he came to a narrow stairway. Groping his way up, he arrived at the beldame's chamber and kicked the door by way of knocking.

"Who is there?"

"Open."

At the sound of that voice the old dame bounded across the floor. The bolt was heard sliding through its staples, and the door flew open. The Un-named glanced his eye around from the threshold. By the light of a lamp burning on a small table he saw Lucia huddled away on the floor in the farther corner of the room.

"Who told thee to toss her there like a bundle of rags, thou wretch?" he said to the servant, bending his brow on her.

" 'Tis her own pleasure," humbly replied the latter. "I've tried with might and main to cheer her, as she can tell your lordship herself, but it skilled nothing."

"Rise up," said the Un-named to Lucia, approaching her. But Lucia, whose panic-stricken soul had been thrown into fresh panic by the knocking, the opening of the door, the appearance of a man and the sound of his voice, remained crouched in her corner closer than ever, her face hidden in her hands and motionless save for her trembling.

"Rise up. I mean thee no harm—and can do thee good," repeated the nobleman. "Rise up," he then thundered in exasperation at having his command twice unheeded.

As though galvanized by terror, the forlorn girl rose at once upon her knees, and joining her hands as she might have done before the image of a saint, she raised her eyes to the Un-named, and immediately lowering them, "I am here," she said; "now kill me."

"I have told thee that I mean thee no harm," replied the Un-named in a subdued voice, his eyes riveted on that face so preyed upon by anguish and terror.

"Come, come; courage," said the beldame. "If his likes telleth thee that he means thee no harm——"

"And wherefore," resumed Lucia, in a voice in which the assurance of indignant desperation struggled with the palsy of fear —"wherefore hast thou made me suffer the torture of the damned? What wrong have I done thee?"

"Have they maltreated thee, perhaps? Speak out."

"Oh! maltreated! Did they not take me by treachery and violence? Why? Why did they seize me? Why am I in this place, and where is it? I am but a poor helpless body. What wrong have I done thee? Oh! in the name of God——"

"God, God," interrupted the Un-named; "always God. Those who lack power to defend themselves are never without their God to invoke, as if they had spoken with Him. Dost thou pretend—? Thinkest thou by that word to strike—" And he left the phrase unfinished.

"Oh, God 'a' mercy! I pretend! What could such a defenceless wretch pretend except to excite thy mercy? God forgiveth so much for one merciful deed. Let me go my ways, I beseech thee; let me go my ways. What will it profit thee at the hour of thy death to have made a poor creature suffer so? Ah! thou who canst speak the word, tell them to let me go. I am here under duress. Send this woman back with me to—to my mother. Oh, Holy Virgin, my mother! my mother! I adjure thee, my mother! She may not be far off—I saw my native mountains today. Why dost thou make me suffer so? Have them conduct me to a church. Ah! do, and I shall pray for thee as long as I live. What will a word cost thee to say? Lo! pity begins to move thee. Say the word, the word, the word. God forgiveth so much for one merciful deed!"

"Oh! why is she not the daughter of one of those curs that have ostracized me?" meanwhile mused the Un-named—"one of those scavengers who would fain see me dead! that now I might gloat over her laments; whereas, instead——"

"Banish not a good inspiration!" warmly pursued Lucia, reanimated by the air of hesitation she perceived in the face and demeanor of her tyrant. "If thou grant not this boon, I shall obtain it from the Lord. He will let me die and my moan is made; but thou!—Perhaps thou also shalt see the day—But, no; I shall always pray God to shield thee from harm. To say but a word—what doth it cost thee? Couldst thou but know the agony I——"

"Come, take heart," interrupted the Un-named with a mildness of manner that made the old crone doubt her senses. "Have I harmed thee? Have I threatened thee?"

"No, no! I perceive thou hast a kind heart that pities the lorn maiden. Wert thou inclined, thou couldst frighten more than any, thou couldst blast me utterly; and instead—thou hast lifted some of the load from my heart. May God requite it! Perfect thy work of mercy; set me free, ah! set me free."

"Tomorrow morning——"

"Oh, now! set me free now!"

"Tomorrow morning we shall meet again, I tell thee. Come, pluck up thy spirits meantime and take thy rest. Thou must stand in need of refreshment. It shall be brought."

"Nay, nay: I shall die if any one enters—I shall die. Do thou take me to the church—God will count thy steps."

"A woman shall come to serve thee," said the Un-named; and, the words having been uttered, he stood in amazement himself that such an expedient should have occurred to him and that the need of seeking one should have arisen in his heart for the sake of satisfying a wench.

"And thou," he resumed, turning swiftly to the old woman, "encourage her to eat, and put her to bed in thy cot. If she wants thee to be her bed-fellow, well and good; otherwise a night on the floor will not harm thee. Encourage her, I tell thee; keep her heart buoyed up. And let her have no complaint to make."

So saying, he rapidly crossed the room. Lucia rose and ran to detain him and renew her appeals, but he had vanished through the doorway.

"Ah! woe's me. Lock the door, at once, at once!" On hearing the door slam and the bolt drawn, she crouched back again into her corner. "Ah! woe's me," she again sobbed. "To whom shall I appeal now! Where am I? Tell me, you, I beseech you, tell me, who is that nobleman—he who spoke to me?"

"Who is he, eh? You would have me tell you who he is, eh? Just wait till I answer. Because he upholdeth you, you must be giving yourself airs. Your curiosity must be satisfied, and I must pay the piper. Ask himself who he is. If I pleasured you even in this, it would not fall to my lot to hear the soft words he spoke to you. I am old, I am old," she continued to mutter. "An apoplexy seize the young! They can make a figure weeping or laughing and are always in the right." But, hearing Lucia sobbing and reverting to the threatening injunction of her master, she stooped over the crouching form of the poor waif and in softened accents resumed: "Come, I have spoken no harm. Be merry. Ask not what I cannot tell, and for the rest, be of good heart. Oh! if you only knew how many would be glad to hear him speak as he hath spoken to you. Be merry, because food will presently be forthcoming; and I who know can vouch —from the way he spoke—it will be rare provender. Then you will to bed and—you will leave a little corner for me, too, I hope," she subjoined in a voice that retained its spleen in spite of her.

"I have no mind to eat or to sleep. Let me alone. Keep your distance. Don't leave the room."

"No, no, no. Worry not," quoth the crone, drawing back and seating herself on a dilapidated chair, whence she would shoot occasional glances of mingled terror and jealousy at her wretched charge. Then her gaze would wander off to her berth, fuming inwardly at the probability of being excluded from it for the whole night and grumbling at the cold. But the thought of the supper and the hope that there would be enough for both cheered her again. Lucia was conscious of neither cold nor hunger, and, bewildered as she was, had only a confused perception of her very griefs and terrors—not unlike the phantasies dreamed by a fever-patient.

She started when a knock came to the door, and, looking up aghast, "Who's there?" she screamed. "Let no one enter."

"No, no. Good news," announced the hag. "'Tis Marta with food."

"Close the door!" Lucia cried.

"Ugh! Directly, directly," replied the old crone; and, taking a basket from the hands of the aforesaid Marta, she dismissed her, and, having bolted the door anew, she deposited the basket on a table in the middle of the chamber. She then invited Lucia repeatedly to come and enjoy the fine fare, breaking forth into exclamations on the exquisiteness of the viands and adopting such expressions as she deemed most potent to excite the appetite of the unhappy girl beside her. "Such morsels as the likes of us remember for a space when we once get to taste them. Wine that the master drinks with his friends—when he hath visitors, see you?—and they would make merry! M-m-m-m!" But seeing that all her allurements were futile, "'Tis yourself that will not," she said. "Don't be for telling him tomorrow that I did not encourage thee. I shall eat, and more than enough will remain for thee, when thou comest to thy senses and will obey." So saying, she proceeded to eat ravenously. When her hunger was sated, she again approached the corner, and, bending over Lucia, repeated her invitation to eat and retire.

"No, no, I desire naught," replied the latter in a feeble, dreamy voice. Then, with more animation, "Is the bolt drawn?" she pursued. "Is it secure?" And, after glancing her eye round the room, she arose and felt her way timidly towards the doorway.

The beldame anticipated her, and, grasping the bolt, shook it, saying: "Do you hear? Do you see? Is it well secured or no? Now are you content?"

"Ah! content! I content here!" exclaimed Lucia, huddling herself anew into the corner. "But the Lord knoweth I am where I am!"

"Come to bed. What would you there, cringing like a dog? Who ever saw folks refusing comfort when it was to be had?"

"No, no; let be."

" 'Tis thou that wishest it so. See! I am leaving thee the coziest spot and taking the outer edge myself. I make myself uncomfortable for thee. Remember how often I have begged thee." So saying, clothed as she was, she disappeared beneath the covers, and all was still.

Lucia remained a motionless heap in the corner, her knees drawn up to her chin and her face hidden in her hands. As far from sleeping as it was from waking, her mind alternated uneasily between her thoughts, her fancies and her fears, chasing one another in rapid succession. At one instant, her brain clearing somewhat and her memory recalling more distinctly the horrors she had seen and suffered during the day, she painfully addressed herself to the circumstances of the dark and terrifying situation in which she was involved. At the next, her mind, transported into darker regions still, wrestled with imaginings born of uncertainty and terror.

She remained for some time in the throes of anguish like this; then, more weary and worn than ever, she stretched out her benumbed limbs and lay, or rather, fell over prostrate, and an interval ensued of something more nearly akin to real sleep. But all at once she started up, as if summoned by a voice within, and she felt that she must rouse herself perfectly and concentrate all her thoughts on discovering her whereabouts and why and how she had come. She strained her ears at a sound that reached her—it was the slow labored snoring of the old woman. She opened wide her eyes and saw the room dimly illumined with a flickering light—it was the rise and fall of the lamp's dying flame which, before expiring totally, continued to ebb and flow like the waves on a beach—such a light as, fading from the objects it discovers before revealing their distinct shapes and color, conveys to the eye only a succession of chimeras. Very soon, however, her recent impressions reviving in her mind enabled her to distinguish what appeared confused to her sense. Fully awake, the unhappy maiden recognized her prison. All the memories of the horrible day gone by, all the terrors of the future, assailed her at once. Even the quiet that now reigned around her after such agitation, the semblance of peace, the

abandonment of her position, produced a fresh access of terror in her soul and, in the depths of her misery, she longed to die.

But at this point she remembered that she could at least pray, and, together with this thought, there dawned in her heart an unexpected hope. She again took up her chaplet and began to tell her beads, and in the same measure as the orisons were framed by her trembling lips her heart felt the increase of an undefined confidence. Suddenly another thought flashed through her mind: Her prayer would be more acceptable and more certain to be heard if, in her devotion, she were to make some offering. She thought of that which she held dearest—or rather, of what she had held dearest on earth; because at that moment her soul was capable of feeling no other emotion than of dread and of conceiving no other desire than that of freedom. She remembered, and resolved forthwith to make the sacrifice. She arose, and, placing herself on her knees, with her hands, from which depended her rosary, clasped before her breast, she raised her face and eyes heavenward and said: "O thrice-holy Virgin! Thou to whom I have so often commended myself and who hast so often solaced my heart! Thou who hast suffered such sorrow and now art so glorious, help me; thou who hast performed so many miracles for poor souls in tribulation, rescue me from these dangers, bring me back safe to my mother, O Mother of God; and I vow before thee to remain a virgin forever more. I renounce forever my poor Renzo, in order from henceforth to belong to none but thee."

The words being uttered, she lowered her head and hung the rosary around her neck in token of her consecration and at the same time as a safeguard—the armor of the new militia in which she was now enrolled. Seating herself again on the floor, she felt a certain peace, a larger confidence, fill her soul. She recalled to mind the "Tomorrow morning" repeated by the powerful unknown, and the words seemed to carry with them a promise of liberation. Her senses, exhausted by the conflict, were gradually lulled to sleep during this respite from thinking; and finally, towards daybreak, with the name of her Protectress half-

finished on her tongue, Lucia fell into a sound, continuous slumber.

But there was another in that same castle who would fain have done the same, and could not. After departing, it might be said escaping, from Lucia and giving the order for her supper, the nobleman had made his accustomed rounds of certain posts in the castle with her image before his eye and her words sounding in his ear the whole time. He then bolted into his room and locked the door behind him in mad haste, as if he had to hold a garrison against a battalion of soldiers, and, undressing with the same feverish hurry, threw himself on his bed. But that image, more present to him now than ever, seemed to say: Sleep is not for thee! "What silly, womanish curiosity drove me to see her?" he mused. "That pack-horse of a Nibbio is right; it unmans one. 'Tis true, it doth. But I?—I unmanned? —I? What hath happened? What the foul fiend hath come over me? What is this new thing? Did I not know before now that women whine? So do men also at times, when they cannot revolt? What a pox! Have I never heard women bleat before today?"

At this stage, without any great effort of recollection, his memory conjured up unbidden more cases than one in which neither entreaties nor lamentations had been able to budge him one inch from executing his purpose. But the remembrance of these exploits, far from restoring that resolution which was failing him in the present need or extinguishing the unwelcome pity that was welling up in his soul, stirred up instead a kind of terror, an unaccountable frenzy of repentance, insomuch that it seemed a relief for him to go back again to the image of Lucia, against which he had been trying to steel his courage. "She liveth," he thought; "she is here. There is time yet. I can say: 'Go; be happy once more.' I can see that face brighten. I can even say: 'Pardon me.' Pardon? I sue for pardon? Pardon of a woman? Hah!—Still if one word, even such a word as that, would help me lift this spell from my heart—I would say it. Yes, I feel that I would say it. To what a pass am I come! I am unmanned, I am unmanned. Come!" he then commanded,

tossing angrily on his bed, now turned to stone, beneath sheets that weighed on him like an avalanche. "Come! These be follies that have passed through my brain before. They will pass now, too."

To help them to pass, he went casting about in his mind for something important—one of those matters which were wont to engage him powerfully—that he might become absorbed in it; but his search was vain. Everything seemed changed. That which formerly had stimulated his desires most strongly now had nothing desirable about it. Passion, become all at once like a restive steed balking at a shadow, refused to advance. In reviewing his unfinished enterprises, instead of being spurred on towards the goal or of feeling irritation at hindrances (because in his present mood anger would have been balm), he was saddened, and almost appalled, at the progress his plans had already made. Time seemed a great void, holding no aim, no occupation, no motive, full only of intolerable memories; every hour like that which hung over him now, heavy, monotonous. In imagination he marshalled all his blackguardly crew. For not one of them had he an order that mattered in the least; nay, the very idea of seeing them and being among them again was sickening, unnerving. If he would find an occupation for the morrow at all, any task that was practicable, he was fain to think that on the morrow he could set at liberty the poor wretch he held in thrall.

"Yes, I will set her free. Before the day hath well dawned I shall hasten to her and bid her begone. For her escort—And my plighted word? my honor? Don Rodrigo?—Who is this Don Rodrigo?"

Like one suddenly trapped by the embarrassing question of a superior, the Un-named forthwith racked his brain for an answer to the question put by himself—this new self that arose in the terrible importance it had so suddenly acquired, to pass judgment on the old. He ransacked his memory for the reasons which had decided him, almost before being asked, to assume the task of torturing an unknown wretch without any incentive of hatred or fear, to do a service to Don Rodrigo. Far from

succeeding in his quest for reasons that at that moment seemed a valid excuse for his action, he was at a loss to explain to his own satisfaction what had induced him to make the promise. His assent had not been deliberate. Rather it was the spontaneous motion of a mind obeying the call of sentiments passed and gone, habits of thought, the vestiges of a thousand antecedent impulses. Thus the sorely tormented inquisitor of self, to render an account of one act, found himself plunged into an examination of his whole life. Back, back, from year to year, from feud to feud, from murder to murder, from iniquity to iniquity, each rose out of the past and stood before him in the new light that now shone in his guilty soul, divested of the feelings that had actuated his heart and hand, hideous in their naked deformity, to which those feelings had then blinded him. They were all his; it was himself. This horrid thought, reviving with each apparition and indissolubly linked with it, passed at length into desperation.

He sat up frantically in bed, reached out his hand in frenzy towards the wall next his bed and grasped a pistol. He took it down, and—at the moment of terminating a life now become insupportable his thought, assailed, so to speak, by posthumous fear and disquiet, reached forward to the time that would be when he was no more. He went on picturing to his shuddering imagination his mutilated corpse lying so still, at the mercy of his most abject survivor; the surprise and the confusion in the castle on the morrow; the house turned topsyturvy, and he powerless and speechless, thrown God knew where. He fancied the conversations which would take place about him, in the neighborhood, and in places far away; the delight of his enemies. Even the darkness, the silence, made death seem more melancholy—horrifying. He would not hesitate, so he imagined, were it day, in the open, with spectators about. He could then cast himself into a river and disappear. Engrossed in such excruciating reflections as these, he went on raising and lowering the trigger of the pistol with a convulsive movement of his thumb, when there flashed through his mind still another thought: If that other life, of which they used to speak when I was a boy,

and still speak, doth not exist! If it be only an invention of priests, what am I doing? Why die? What matters it what I have done? What difference doth it make? It's madness, this—And if that other life doth exist——!

At such a possibility, such a risk, there came down upon him a still blacker and more awful despair, from which there was no escape—not even with death. He let fall the weapon and began clawing his hair, his teeth chattering, his body all of a tremble. All at once his mind reverted to the words he heard twice repeated a few hours before: God forgiveth so much for one merciful deed. The words came back to him now, not in accents of the humble supplication in which they had been uttered, but in a tone full of authority and prophetic of distant hope. That moment was one of relief. He lowered his hands from his temples and with an air somewhat more composed he fixed his mind's eye on her from whose lips those words had dropped, and saw her, now no longer as his prisoner and suppliant, but in the attitude of one who dispenses graces and consolation. He longed for daybreak, that he might hasten to set her free and hear from her lips still other words of comfort and life. He even fancied him taking her back to her mother himself. "And then? What shall I do tomorrow, for the rest of the day? And the day after? And the day after that again? And the night? the night that will come back again after only twelve hours! Ah, the night! No, no, no; the night!"

Launched once more into the weary void of the future, his mind sought in vain an employment of his time, some way to beguile the days and the nights. At one instant he proposed to flee his castle and go off to foreign parts, where none would know him even by name; but his own self would be there inseparably. At the next there blazed up in his heart anew the lurid hope of recovering his former spirit and inclinations—this was only a passing delirium. Now he feared the day which must exhibit him to his household so miserably changed; now he longed for it, as if it were to throw its light upon the darkness of his mind. And behold! just at dawn, or shortly after Lucia had fallen asleep, there was borne to his ears, as he sat there motionless

on the bed, a wave of sound, faint and confused, but indefinably blithesome. He listened, and made out a distant pealing of festive bells; and after some moments more he heard the echo from the mountains lazily repeat the symphony and mingle insensibly with it. After a short interval he heard more chiming nearer by, also in festal strain; then another. "What jollity is this? Whence this happiness?" He leaped up from his bed of thorns, and, clothing himself partly, he hastened to open a window and look out. The mountains were still half-veiled by mist. The sky was not so much clouded as one continuous pall of ashen grey. Still, by the gradually broadening light, he could distinguish people passing along the road in the bottom of the valley, others issuing from their homes, and both bending their steps in the one direction—towards the gap to the right of the castle. All were clad in gala dress and all were extraordinarily light-hearted. "What the de'il aileth them? What gladness hath come over this accursed village? Whither is all yon rabble bound?" And, raising his voice, he called to a henchman that slept in an adjoining room to ask the cause of the stir. The other, who knew just as much of the circumstances as he did himself, replied that he would go at once to inquire.

The nobleman stood, with elbows resting on the window-sill, all intent on the animated spectacle below. There were men, women and children, walking, some in groups, some in pairs, others alone. One wayfarer would overtake another ahead of him and keep him company. Another would sally forth from his house and take up with the first to pass by. Henceforth they would go together like friends bent on the same journey. Their actions plainly indicated a haste and a joy common to all, and the jangled yet congenial tolling of the various bells, some nearer, some farther off, seemed like the voice of the pantomime below, making up for the words that could not reach the interested spectator on the mountain. He looked and looked; and, as he looked, a something more than curiosity made him wonder what it was that could excite such community of rapture in so many different people at once.

Chapter XXII

The bravo soon returned to report that Cardinal Federigo Borromeo, the Archbishop of Milan, had arrived at —— the day before, and would tarry all this day; that the news of his arrival, spread broadcast through the hamlets round about that evening, had made every one eager to go and see such a personage; and that the bells had rung more for jubilation than to call the people to church.

The nobleman, left to himself, continued to gaze into the valley, more pensive than ever. "A mere man! What anxiety, what alacrity, to see a mere man! Still not one of any of those churls but hath his own demon of care. Not like mine though; not like mine! None of them will have passed such a night as I! Whence hath this man the power to render folk so joyful? A few farthings that he distributes at random—But those are not all going for alms. What then! Some mummery, some ranting, words!—Ah! if he had words to soothe my breast! if —Why should not I go, too? Why not?—I shall; I will. I must talk with him—I must talk with him in private. What shall I say? No matter. Whatever, whatever—I'll go hear what this man hath to say."

His resolution being taken thus vaguely, he hurriedly finished dressing himself, donning a greatcoat cut something after the military fashion. He then thrust the weapon which still lay upon the bed into a holster at his belt, which he further garnished with a dagger and a second pistol that he took from a peg on the wall. From the same place he next brought down a carbine whose fame well-nigh rivalled his own, and, slinging it over his shoulder, he grabbed his hat and went out. The first place he sought was Lucia's retreat. Depositing his carbine in a corner outside, he knocked and called at the same time. The beldame bounded from the bed and ran to unbolt the door. The noble entered,

and, surveying the room with a glance, saw Lucia huddled in her corner, inert.

"Asleep?" he inquired in a whisper of the crone. "Asleep, there? Were those my orders, wretch?"

"I did my best," replied the other; "but she would neither eat nor come——"

"Let her rest. Take heed thou disturb her not, and when she awakens—Marta shall come to the adjoining room, and do thou send for whatever she may require. When she awakens—tell her that I—that the master hath left for a brief space, but will return and—grant all her wishes."

The dame was in amaze. "Is she, then, some princess?" she wondered.

The nobleman withdrew, resuming his carbine as he passed out, and sent Marta to play the waiting-maid. After despatching the first bravo he met to stand guard outside the room, that no one else might enter, he sallied forth from the castle and strode rapidly down the hill.

Our manuscript does not say how far it was from the castle to the village where the cardinal was staying, but from the events we are about to narrate we gather that it could not have been more than a pleasant hour's walk. This could not be inferred merely from the circumstance that the inhabitants of the valley, and of places still farther away, flocked thither, because we learn from chronicles of the period that people came twenty miles and more to see this same Federigo.

The bravos whom the Un-named met on the way down halted respectfully at his approach, thinking that haply he had some command to issue or some expedition on which he wished to take them, and were at a loss what to think of his present demeanor and the scowl he gave them in return for their obeisances.

When he was in the highway, what the passers-by marveled at was seeing him thus unattended. But besides marveling, each one stepped aside and left room enough to have accommodated a retinue, raising his cap respectfully at the same time. Arriving at the village, he found a great crowd assembled, but his name passed rapidly from mouth to mouth, and a lane opened

up at once. He approached one of the throng and inquired where the cardinal was to be found. "At the pastor's," replied the other, bowing and pointing to the rectory. The nobleman bent his steps in the direction indicated and entered a small courtyard filled with priests, all of whom stared at him with a look at once of amazement and suspicion. He saw directly ahead of him an open door leading into a small reception-room, likewise filled with priests. He unslung his weapon, and, setting it in a corner of the courtyard, he entered the room. Ensued more staring, a general buzz, a reverberation of one name, then silence. The object of this attention turned to one of the group and inquired where the cardinal was—he wished to speak with him.

"I am a stranger," replied his interlocutor, and, glancing around, he called to the cardinal's chaplain, who was in the act of whispering to a confrère standing next to him in a corner of the apartment: "Him? The notorious bandit? What brings him here? Avaunt!" Nevertheless at the summons, which boomed out like a cannon against the dead silence, he was fain to go. He bowed to the Un-named and stood listening to his wishes. He raised his eyes with timid curiosity to the face of the desperado, but lowered them on the instant. He hesitated a moment, then said, or rather, stammered: "I am not sure whether his grace is at present in—at leisure—to be seen. Enough. I shall go see." And, much against his inclination, he went to bear the message to the cardinal in the adjoining room.

At this point in our story we cannot refrain from pausing for a few moments—as the tired traveler, weary of plodding through long stretches of parched and savage country, stops to beguile an hour in the shade of some fine tree on the grassy margent of a spring. We have fallen in with a personage whose name and memory, at whatever juncture they may be presented to the mind, cannot fail to refresh it with a soothing thrill of reverence and a grateful appeal to its sympathies. How much more so now, after so many painful descriptions and the contemplation of such manifold and nauseous wickedness! A few words about this character are simply indispensable; those who are not in-

terested in hearing them and who still wish to pursue the story, may pass on immediately to the next chapter.

Federigo Borromeo, born in 1564, was of the number of those, rare in any period, who have employed distinguished talents, all the resources of a great fortune, all the advantages of a privileged rank and the undeviating purpose of a lifetime in the quest and the practice of the better things. His life resembles a brook, which gushes forth limpid from the rock and without ever growing stagnant or muddy in its long career through different soils, goes limpidly on its way to join the river. Surrounded by pomp and self-indulgence, from his boyhood up he gave ear to those lessons of humility and self-denial, those maxims concerning the vanity of pleasure, the injustice of pride, man's true dignity and riches, which, heeded or unheeded by the soul within, are transmitted from one generation to another in the most elementary religious education. He gave ear, I say, to those lessons and those maxims, he took them seriously, tasted them, found them true. He saw that, as a consequence, there could be no truth in other lessons and maxims opposed to the former, which still are transmitted from generation to generation with the same positiveness and sometimes from the same lips; and he proposed to take as the norm of his actions and his thoughts those which were true. Persuaded that life was not destined as a burden for the many and a holiday for the few, but as a responsibility for all, for which all alike must render an account, he began from childhood to consider how he could render his life useful and holy.

In 1580 he signified his resolution of consecrating himself to the Church's service and received its livery from the hands of his cousin Charles, whom an already long-standing and universal renown, proclaimed a saint. Shortly after, he entered the college founded by his relative in Pavia, which still bears the family name; and, while he applied himself assiduously to the occupations that he there found prescribed, he voluntarily assumed two others: teaching Christian doctrine to the most ignorant and neglected classes of the people, and visiting, consoling, succoring and ministering to the sick. He availed himself of the influence

with which everything about the place invested him to induce his companions to co-operate with him in works of zeal, and in every profitable or noble direction he enjoyed a sort of chieftancy of example—a leadership that his own personal endowments would, perhaps, have sufficed to win him, even had he been inferior to all in rank. Advantages of another kind, which his station could have procured for him, were not only not sought after, but studiously shunned. His table inclined more towards poverty than frugality, as his wardrobe verged on poverty rather than plainness, and the whole man was in keeping with this two-fold trait in every detail of his life and conduct. Nor did he ever feel it a duty to depart from this austerity, much as some of his kinsmen inveighed against it and complained that it belittled the dignity of their house.

With the college authorities he had another war to wage. They tried to smuggle in or foist upon him by surprise one article after another of more genteel furniture, some badge to distinguish him from the rest and mark him as the lord-paramount of the place; whether by such attentions they thought ultimately to win his favor, or were actuated by that servile devotion which is puffed up and exhilarated by another's splendor; or whether they were of the number of those discreet individuals who take umbrage at virtue as readily as at vice and proclaim that perfection stands in the middle, the middle being that precise point at which they themselves have arrived and settled down comfortably. Federigo, far from yielding to these efforts, reprimanded those who made them. This between boyhood and adolescence.

That during the lifetime of Cardinal Charles, his senior by twenty-six years, and in the presence of so grave and august a character (who presented to his contemporaries a living picture of holiness and an epitome of its works, and who exercised an influence on those about him, no matter what their number or quality, to which they would have paid spontaneous and unequivocal homage, were there any need of it), Federigo should have sought to model his childhood and youth after the demeanor

and convictions of such a superior, is surely no object of surprise. What is noteworthy is that after the death of his kinsman not one could have perceived that Federigo, then a youth of twenty, had been bereft of a monitor and guide. The growing renown of his talents, his erudition and his piety, the kinship and patronage of more than one powerful cardinal, the prestige of his house, and the family name itself, which Charles had identified with the idea of sanctity and pre-eminence—everything that should qualify men and everything that does qualify them for ecclesiastical dignities, combined to promise them to him. But, convinced in his heart of what no one who professes Christianity can deny with his lips, that there is no just precedence of man over man except in point of service, he feared elevation and tried to escape it: not, certainly, that he shunned the service of his fellow-man, because few lives have been so full of it as his; but because he considered himself neither worthy nor capable of service at once so exalted and so perilous. So, when in 1595 the archbishopric of Milan was offered to him by Clement VIII, he appeared grievously disturbed and unhesitatingly refused the promotion. Later on he submitted to the pope's express command.

Such demonstrations, as every one knows, are neither difficult nor infrequent, and hypocrisy need exert no more ingenuity to make them, at all events, than buffoonery to ridicule them. But do they therefore cease to be the natural expression of a virtuous and wise impulse? A man's life is the touchstone of his words; and words that express such an impulse as this, even though they were on the tongue of every impostor and jester in the world, will always be beautiful, when they are preceded and followed by a life of disinterestedness and self-sacrifice.

As archbishop, Federigo evidenced a singular and unremitting vigilance against appropriating to personal uses any more wealth, time, attention—any more of himself, in fine—than was strictly necessary. He used to say, as all do say, that ecclesiastical revenues are the patrimony of the poor; how he interpreted this maxim may be seen from the following. He had an estimate

made of the maximum outlay which his maintenance and that of his household might entail. On being informed that it was six hundred *scudi* (a *scudo* was the gold coin, which, without any change in weight or value, later on came to be called the *zecchino*), he ordered that such a sum should be transferred annually out of his private treasury to the account of his *mensa*, believing that, with his immense riches, it was not permissible to live on this patrimony. As to his private patrimony, so niggardly, so mathematical was he in doling it out to himself that he took care not to discard clothing until it was actually ragged; uniting, however, as contemporary writers have noted, with this predilection for simplicity the cultivation of meticulous cleanliness—two noteworthy traits, in point of fact, in an age of gorgeousness and dirt. Likewise, not to waste any of the fragments from his humble board, he assigned them to a hospice for the poor, one of the latter having the privilege of entering his dining-room each day to collect what was left over.

These are preoccupations that might perhaps suggest meanness, parsimony, miserliness, a mind engrossed in trivialties and incapable of lofty conceptions, could we not point to the Ambrosian Library, planned by the same Federigo with the boldest prodigality and built by him from its foundations up at so enormous a cost. Its equipment of books and manuscripts he furnished with no less munificence. Besides donating those which he had already collected at a great expenditure of money and thought, he sent out eight men who ranked among the most expert and cultured scholars that his day afforded to make further acquisitions in Italy, in France, in Spain, in Germany, Flanders, Greece, Libanus and Jerusalem. Thus he succeeded in bringing together about thirty thousand printed volumes and fourteen thousand manuscripts. To the library he joined a learned academy (the academicians were nine, all pensioned by him as long as he lived; afterwards, the ordinary revenues not proving equal to this outlay, they were reduced to two), whose function was to cultivate the study of theology, history, polite letters, ecclesiastical archeology and the Oriental tongues, with the duty of pub-

lishing treatises, each upon the matter assigned to him.[1] To this was added a college, which he himself styled the "Trilingual," for the study of Greek, Latin and Italian, and a normal school where pupils might be indoctrinated in these languages and sciences, to be professors of them some day in turn. Finally, he incorporated in his scheme a printing establishment for the Oriental tongues,—that is to say, Hebrew, Chaldaic, Arabic, Persian and Armenian,—a gallery of painting and another of sculpture, and a school of the three principal arts of design. For the latter there were teachers to hand.

For the remainder, we have seen the pains he was put to in the collection of books and manuscripts. It would certainly be more difficult to find type for these various languages, which were less cultivated in Europe then than they are today, and still more difficult than the type, men such as he desiderated. Suffice it to say that of the nine academicians eight were chosen from among his young seminarists; from which we can infer the estimate he formed of the existing scholarship and learned repu-

[1] [The reader can, possibly, best appreciate the function of this department, called literally the "College of Doctors," as well as the "perennial usefulness" of the Ambrosiana, by the aid of a quotation from a 1922 issue of "La Croix," telling in some detail of the valuable service rendered by the present Sovereign Pontiff, Pius XI, while he was a member of this "Collegio di Dottori."

"The Ambrosiana has never ceased to be an autonomous institution, endowed with civil personality. Side by side with its 'College of Conservators,' charged with the work of administration, it has its 'College of Doctors,' whose mission is to reveal the treasures it offers to scholarship as well as the works of art assembled in its collections and its gallery. They do this by publishing their own personal monographs; they do it also by facilitating the use of its immense intellectual riches by scholars and educated people in general.

"The list of Monsignor Ratti's publications show how perfectly he fulfilled the first part of his official duty. But the services rendered by the Doctor of the Ambrosiana to scholars and applicants were not less remarkable. Always ready to leave off his personal labors when his advice was sought or information needed, his correspondence—which was rapid, abundant and accurate—furnished immeasurable help to savants and inquirers of every nation. Never an evasive reply. Always detailed indications, an abundant bibliography, and, if it was question of beginners, veritable direction in their scientific pursuits."—TRANSLATOR.]

tations of the period—an estimate that apparently coincides with posterity's, which has consigned both to oblivion.

The regulations he formulated for the conduct and use of the library betray an aim of perennial usefulness, which is not only admirable in itself but in many respects wise and considerate beyond the notions and customs of the time. He directed the librarian to maintain correspondence with the greatest savants in Europe, in order to be apprised of the state of the sciences and the publication of the best books that appeared on every subject, which were then to be purchased. He was to point out to students the works of which they might be ignorant and which would be useful for them to know. Every one, citizen and stranger alike, was to receive whatever accommodations he needed and leisure to use them. Such an aim must now seem to every one a natural and inevitable implication of such an establishment. Then it was not so. In a history of the Ambrosiana written (with the elegance and precision common in that age) by a certain Pierpaolo Bosca, who was librarian after the death of Federigo, it is expressly noted as a singular circumstance that in this library, founded by a private individual almost entirely at his own expense, the books were exposed to public view and given to whoever asked, as were also a place to sit and pen, paper and ink, to take the notes he might require; while in certain other celebrated libraries of Italy the books were not even visible, but were locked in ambries, whence they were taken only when the librarian's graciousness might prompt him to show them for a second to visitors. As for affording applicants the means of study, it was not even contemplated in idea. So that the enrichment of such libraries meant withdrawing books from common use—one of those culture-schemes (which abounded, and still abound) that cultivated, by sterilizing, the soil.

Let the reader not ask what was the effect of these foundations of Borromeo upon the enlightenment of the public. It would be easy to demonstrate, as such demonstrations go, that it was miraculous, or that it was nil. To determine approximately what these results really were and tabulate them, would be very tedious, of little profit, and irrelevant. But what a gen-

erous, wise, benevolent and persevering lover of humanity and its betterment must not he have been who decided on such a work,—decided on it, that is, in his own decisive way,—and then accomplished it in the midst of the prevailing ignorance, apathy and hostility to all scholarly exertion, consequently, to the accompaniment of such expressions as: "What uselessness! Save the mark! What next? This is the climax!" the tale of which would most certainly have exceeded the *scudi* he expended on the undertaking, and that was one hundred and fifty thousand, being mostly his own money.

To call such a man beneficent and liberal in the highest degree might seem to imply that it is superfluous for us to know whether or not he spent many *scudi* more in the immediate relief of the poor; and it may be that there still exist persons who deem expenditures of the sort we have described, nay, expenditures of any sort whatsoever, as the best and most useful form of charity. But Federigo held almsgiving, properly so-called, to be an indispensable duty; and here again his actions jumped with his convictions. His whole life was one continuous dispensation to the poor; and that same famine to which our story has already alluded will shortly afford us an opportunity to mention certain traits of conduct that show what wisdom and thoughtfulness he could unite with his liberality. From a multitude of noteworthy examples of this delicacy instanced by his biographers we shall here select only one. Having learned that a certain nobleman was employing chicanery and duress to make a nun of his daughter, who preferred to wed, he summoned the father, and, having extracted from him the admission that the real motive underlying this persecution was the lack of four thousand *scudi* necessary to marry her off suitably, Federigo himself provided the dowry. Perhaps to some, such liberality may appear excessive, ill-advised, unduly lenient towards the silly caprices of a proud parent, there being hundreds of ways in which four thousand *scudi* might be much better employed. To this we have nothing to reply, unless it be that we could desire to see more frequent excesses in a virtue as unaffected by prevailing notions (each age has its own), as independent of the general

tendency, as was this giving of four thousand *scudi* to keep a young woman out of the cloister.

The man's inexhaustible charity appeared not only in his giving; it shone forth in all his deportment. Easy of access to all, he deemed it especially incumbent on him in dealing with those of the so-called lower classes to wear a cheerful countenance and deport himself with affectionate courtesy, the more so the less they were esteemed by the world. Here again he had to combat good worthy men of the *ne quid nimis* persuasion, who in every particular would have kept him within bounds—the bounds of their own limitations, of course. Once in the course of a visit to an uncouth Alpine village, as Federigo was instructing certain children of the poor and interspersing his questions and expositions with loving caresses, one of these monitors cautioned him to be more reserved in lavishing his endearments on the tots, because they were so dirty and disgusting; as if Federigo's senses were not keen enough to make this discovery nor his perspicacity capable of hitting on so subtle an expedient. Such, in certain times and conditions, is the misfortune of men in exalted positions—there are few to admonish them of their faults, but no lack of those with courage enough to reprove them for doing good. "They are my souls," replied the good bishop not without some irritation, "and they may never see my face again. And you would not have me to embrace them?"

It was rarely, however, that he indulged such irritation, admired as he was for the gentleness of his ways and his imperturbable calmness. So perfectly were these qualities developed that they might be attributed to an extraordinarily happy temperament. In reality they were the result of constant discipline on a naturally impulsive and sensitive disposition. If at times he showed himself stern, even harsh, it was with such of his subordinate clergy as he found to be guilty of avarice, of negligence, or of some other failing particularly opposed to the spirit of their noble ministry. For all that touched either his own interests or his glory before the world, he never exhibited a sign of joy or regret, of eagerness or excitement—a wonderful thing if such

emotions were not excited in his soul; more wonderful still, if they were.

Not only did he carry off from the many conclaves at which he assisted the reputation of having never aspired to a position as tempting to ambition as it is terrifying to piety, but once, when a colleague of great influence came to offer him his suffrage and that of his faction (an ugly word, but it is the one they used then), Federigo rejected the proposal in such wise that the other changed his mind and turned elsewhere. This same modesty and repugnance to ascendancy over others appeared equally in the common junctures of life. Assiduous and indefatigable in administering and governing when he deemed it his duty, he always avoided interfering in other people's affairs, nay, excused himself with all his might from interposing even when solicited—a discretion and temperance not common, as every one knows, in men of zeal like Federigo's.

Were we to give a free rein to our own pleasure in accumulating the striking traits of his character, the result would certainly be a singular assemblage of apparently contrary merits. Unquestionably they are hard to find in combination. Still we shall not omit mentioning one more unique characteristic of this beautiful life. Filled though it was with activity,—with the work of governing, with official functions, with instructing, with audiences, diocesan visitations, traveling, even conflict,—study was not only not excluded from it, but even occupied as much place as would have sufficed for a man of professional literary pursuits. In fact, together with so many other and different titles to praise, Federigo also enjoyed among his contemporaries the reputation of a ripe scholar.

We must not, however, conceal from our readers that he held firmly in principle and maintained perseveringly in practice certain opinions which in our day would strike every one as outlandish rather than unscientific—I mean even those who would be most eager to find them just. Were one bent on defending him in this, there is, of course, the current and widely received excuse that these were errors of the time rather than of the individual—an excuse, which, in so far as it is applied to certain

points and is derived from a definite examination of facts, may possess some value, nay, much value, but which, employed thus baldly and at random, as it generally is, means just nothing. And so, not wishing to solve complicated problems with simple formulas nor to prolong a mere episode unduly, we shall discuss the question no further; having fulfilled our duty in mentioning thus cursorily that we do not claim for so admirable a character on the whole that everything in it was equally so. Else it might appear that our purpose was to write a funeral sermon.

It will certainly be no injustice to our readers to suppose that some of them will inquire whether a man of this calibre has left no monument of his genius and erudition. Verily he has. Almost a hundred of his works, large and small, are still extant, counting those in Latin and those in Italian, manuscripts and printed books, all preserved in the library built by him—treatises on ethics, sermons, dissertations on history, sacred and profane antiquity, literature, art and other subjects.

"And how is it," some reader will ask, "that all these works are forgotten, or at least so little known and sought? How is it that, with such genius, such erudition, such familiarity with men and affairs, such reflection, such a passion for goodness and beauty, such transparence of soul and so many more of those qualities which make up the great writer, Cardinal Borromeo has not left us, among these hundred works, one that is accounted superlative even by those who do not approve it unreservedly, and known by title even to those who have not read it? How is it that, taken collectively, they have not by their number, if nothing else, sufficed to win him literary renown with posterity?"

The inquiry is undoubtedly logical and interesting; because the reasons underlying this phenomenon could be ascertained by the observation of many general laws, and, when ascertained, would lead to the explanation of other kindred phenomena. But these reasons would be both many and tedious. And what if, after all, they went against the grain or made you turn up your nose? So it will be better to take up the thread of our narrative, and, instead of prattling any longer about the man in question, proceed to study him in action under the guidance of our author.

Chapter XXIII

Cardinal Federigo, during the interval of waiting to begin the divine offices, sat studying,—his accustomed way of employing these odds and ends of time,—when his chaplain entered, perturbation written on his countenance.

"A strange visitor, your illustrious lordship—strange, in sooth."

"Who is it?" asked the cardinal.

"None less than the Baron ———" replied the chaplain; and, accenting each syllable with great significance, he pronounced the name that we are unable to transcribe for our readers. Then he subjoined: "He waits without in person, and asks for nothing less than to be presented to your illustrious lordship."

"He!" exclaimed the cardinal, his face all animation, and closing his book as he arose from the chair. "Let him come in, let him come in at once."

"But—" rejoined the chaplain without budging. "Your illustrious lordship should know who this is—the outlaw, the notorious——"

"And is it not a happy chance for a bishop when such a man is inspired with a wish to come and see him?"

"But—" insisted the chaplain. "We can never broach certain subjects, because your lordship says it is all nonsense. Still, when the event arrives, I deem it a duty— Zeal breedeth enemies, your lordship; and we know positively that more than one blackguard hath made it his boast that, some day or other——"

"And what have they ever done?" interrupted the cardinal.

"I tell your lordship that this man is a broker in crime, a desperado who maintains relations with more bloodthirsty desperados than himself, and he may be sent to——"

"Oh, what manner of discipline is this," again broke in Federigo, smiling, "when soldiers exhort their general to cowardice?" Then, becoming serious and thoughtful, he resumed: "The blessed Charles would never have been caught debating whether

or not he should receive such a one—he would have gone to seek him. Admit him at once; he hath already waited too long."

The chaplain withdrew, saying to himself: "It skills nothing; these saints are all headstrong."

Upon opening the door and looking into the chamber where he had left the nobleman in company with his colleagues, he saw the latter withdrawn to one side, whispering and directing covert glances at the other, who stood in a corner alone. He approached, and, inspecting him meanwhile as best he could out of the tail of his eye, he continued to wonder what untold arsenals of weapons might lurk beneath the coat, and whether, before admitting him, he ought not at least to propose that— But he could not summon up courage. Being come up to him, "The archbishop awaits your lordship," he said. "Will it please you to come with me?" And, leading the way through the little crowd, which promptly opened up a passage, he distributed right and left sundry glances, which seemed to say: "What would you? You know as well as I that he ever goeth his own gait."

The Un-named was hardly across the threshold, when Federigo advanced to meet him with an air of solicitude and frankness on his brow, and his arms opened wide as if to receive a much-desired guest. He beckoned the chaplain to withdraw, which he did.

The two remained for some moments without speaking, each hesitating from a different motive. The Un-named, who had been forced thither by an inexplicable frenzy rather than led by a determinate plan, continued there as if in obedience to the same force, torn by two conflicting emotions: one, a confused longing and hope to find relief from the torture within; the other, shame and exasperation at coming thus in the guise of a penitent, a beaten foe, a cur, to confess his fault and supplicate a mere man. He found no words to utter and scarcely sought any. Still, on raising his eyes to the face before him, he felt his being penetrated yet deeper with a sentiment of veneration at once peremptory and tender, which, increasing his confidence, mitigated his vexation, and without making a frontal attack on his pride, disarmed it and reduced it to silence.

Federigo's was, in point of fact, one of those personalities which make their superiority felt but, at the same time, loved. His bearing was naturally dignified, with a touch of almost unconscious majesty, and the years had neither bowed his frame nor slackened his step. His eyes were serious but full of animation, his brow frank but thoughtful. Amid the evidences of abstinence, of meditation and care, with his white hairs and his pallid color, there was about him withal a kind of virginal bloom. All the lines of his face indicated that, at an earlier period, there had been that which is more properly termed handsome; now the habit of solemn and benignant thinking, the inward peace of a long lifetime, the love of his fellow-man and the uninterrupted joy of hopes ineffable, had superseded this attribute with a kind of autumnal beauty, which was thrown into stronger relief by the magnificent simplicity of the purple.

He also remained some moments with his penetrating gaze riveted on the face of the Un-named, and, accustomed as he was from long practice to extract a man's thoughts from his features, he seemed to discover beneath this lowering and agitated exterior something that every instant sent higher the hopes he had conceived at the first announcement of such a visit. "Ah!" he said, aglow with animation, "what a precious visit is this! And how grateful should not I be for thy kind resolution, notwithstanding that it conveyeth something like a rebuke to me!"

"A rebuke!" exclaimed the nobleman, astonished yet softened at these words and this demeanor, and pleased that the cardinal had broken the ice and got some conversation under weigh.

"Surely it is a rebuke to me," rejoined the other, "that I have let thee be beforehand with me, when for so long, so many, many times, I should have gone to thee."

"To me—thou! Dost know who I am? Have they told thee my name?"

"And thinkest thou I should experience this consolation, which I now feel and which my face must certainly manifest, at the announcement of an unknown name or the sight of a stranger? It is thou who hast made me feel so—thou, I say, whom I should have sought out, but whom, at least, I have loved and lamented

so sincerely and for whom I have prayed so fervently—thou, whom of all my sons (and I love them all dearly) I would have most longed to welcome and embrace, had I thought such hopes possible. But God alone can work wonders, and He maketh up for the weakness and tardiness of His poor servants."

The Un-named was thunderstruck at this impassioned flow of words, answering so emphatically the thoughts he had not yet uttered nor fully decided that he would utter. Moved, but dismayed, he held his peace. "What!" resumed Federigo in a still more affectionate tone. "Thou hast good tidings for me, and thou keepest me so long in suspense?"

"I have good tidings? I, whose heart is a hell, I have good tidings for thee? Say, if one knowest so much, what good tidings thou thinkest to hear from one like me."

"That God hath touched thy heart and would make thee His," placidly replied the cardinal.

"God! God! God! Ah, could I but see Him, could I but hear Him! Where is this God?"

"Thou askest? thou? And to whom is He closer? Dost thou not feel Him at thy heart, oppressing thee, tormenting thee, giving thee no rest, and, at the same time, alluring thee, tempting thee, with a foretaste of peace and consolation—consolation that shall be full and inexhaustible once thou acknowledgest Him, confessest Him, supplicatest Him?"

"Yes, yes; of a truth I have that which oppresseth and haunteth me. But, God! If there be this God, and if He be what they say, what use can He have for me?"

These words were spoken in an accent of despair. But Federigo, in a solemn tone, as of placid inspiration, replied: "What use can He have for thee? Nay, what use hath He for thee? To be a sign of His power and His goodness. He would derive a glory from thee that no one else can render Him. What glory is it to Him that the world hath cried out for so long a time against thee and raised its voice in abomination of thy deeds?" (The Un-named started, and, for a moment, astonishment seized him at hearing language so unwonted; then his astonishment in-

creased that at such freedom he felt no indignation, but rather a kind of relief.)

"Those are cries," pursued Federigo, "of terror, of self-interest —of justice, it may be, but of a justice so easy, so natural to espouse! in some cases, unhappily, of envy at thy ill-omened power and thy heretofore lamentable sense of security. But when thou shalt rise in judgment against thy own life and turn accuser against thine own self, then God shall be glorified indeed. And thou askest what use God can have for thee? Who am I that I, poor mortal, should be able to say at present the use which such a Master can make of thee and of that impetuous will and dauntless fixedness of purpose, once He hath quickened and inflamed them with love, with hope and repentance? Who art thou, weak man, that thou shouldst deem thy sole self capable of devising and executing more wickedness than the good which God can make thee both to will and to perform? What use can God have for thee? Can He not pardon thee? save thee? fulfil in thee the work of Redemption? Are not such things sublime and worthy of His power? Think, I beseech thee: If I, wretch though I be, abject and filled with self—if I, such as I am, travail in spirit for thy salvation to such a degree that for thee (as God is my witness) I would gladly give my few remaining days, ah, think what must be the love of Him, who infuseth in me a love so imperfect, yet so lively; how He must love thee and want thee, who compels and inspires in me a love for thee that devoureth my whole being!"

As his lips shaped the sound of these words, his countenance, his look, his every movement was instinct with the sentiments they expressed. The face of his hearer, from being convulsed and wild, became at first all astonishment and attention, then composed itself to an expression of emotion less tumultuous and painful. His eyes, which had not been wet since infancy, filled with tears, and, when the speaking had ceased, he buried his face in his hands and gave himself up to uncontrollable weeping as the most definitive and articulate reply he could make.

"God of might and goodness!" exclaimed Federigo, raising his eyes and his hands towards heaven. "What have I, Thy un-

profitable servant, Thy sleepy shepherd, ever done that Thou shouldst call me to this banquet of grace, that Thou shouldst deem me worthy to assist at this joyful prodigy!" So saying, he extended his hand to grasp that of the Un-named.

"Nay!" cried the latter—"nay! approach not me! Defile not that innocent hand, the instrument only of good. Thou knowest not all the works of this which thou wouldst clasp."

"Suffer me," said Federigo, accomplishing his purpose with affectionate violence—"suffer me to press this hand, which shall repair so many wrongs, scatter so many benefits, succor so many afflicted and be extended unarmed in peace and humility to so many enemies."

"'Tis too much," sobbed the Un-named. "Leave me, my lord; good Federigo, leave me. A churchful awaits thee—good people, innocent souls, come from afar to see thee and hear thee but once; and thou tarriest—with whom!"

"Let us leave the ninety and the nine," answered the cardinal. "They are safe on the mountain. I will stay with the sheep which was lost. Those souls are, perchance, happier now than in seeing a paltry bishop like me. Belike God, who hath wrought in thee a miracle of mercy, is diffusing over them a joy of which they do not yet divine the cause. That congregation is perhaps united to us unwittingly; perhaps the Holy Spirit is kindling in their hearts an undefined glow of charity, a prayer that is accounted to thee, a thanksgiving of which thou art the object unawares." So saying, he flung his arms about the neck of the Un-named, who after seeking to evade him and struggling for an instant against these advances, yielded, as if overborne by the momentum of such love, and flung his own arms around the neck of the cardinal, burying his face, all trembling and awry, on his shoulder. His hot tears fell on the untarnished purple of Federigo, and the stainless hands of the latter affectionately sought the other's grasp or pressed the folds of that garment which was so used to concealing weapons of violence and treachery.

Disengaging himself, at length, from this embrace, the Un-named again clasped his hand over his eyes, and, raising his face

at the same time, "God of might and goodness undeniable!" he exclaimed. "I know myself now, I realize what I am! My wickedness is before me. I am an object of loathing to myself. Still—still my soul is relieved, happy, yea! happier than it hath ever been in all my horrible life."

"It is a presage," said Federigo, "that God vouchsafeth thee to draw thee to His service, to encourage thee to enter intrepidly upon that new life in which thou shalt have so much to undo, so much to repair, so much to bewail."

"Woe's me!" exclaimed the noble. "How much—how very much—that I can only bewail. But, at least, I have some undertakings barely begun which I can break off, if no more—one that I can break off, undo, repair at once."

Federigo lent his attention; and the Un-named related briefly, but in terms of execration yet stronger than those we have employed, the outrage done Lucia, her pitiable fright and anguish; how she had prayed, and the frenzy that her prayers had wrought in him; how she was still detained in his castle——

"Ah, let us lose no time!" exclaimed Federigo, breathless with sympathy and solicitude. "Happy man! This is the earnest of God's pardon; He enableth thee to become an instrument of salvation where thou hadst meant to be the means of ruin. May God bless thee! Knowest thou from whence she cometh, this poor, sorely tried damsel?"

The nobleman named Lucia's hamlet.

"It is not far," said the cardinal. "God be praised; and perchance—" So saying, he hurried to a table and rang a bell. The chaplain entered straightway, and his first care was to look at the Un-named. Seeing his features so altered and his eyes red with weeping, he next glanced at the cardinal, and, perceiving under his unalterable composure a look of grave satisfaction and almost impatient concern, he was ready to stand in open-mouthed ecstasy, if the cardinal had not roused him at once from his contemplation, inquiring whether, among the assembled priests, the pastor of —— was to be found.

"He is, your illustrious worship," replied the chaplain.

"Bid him come hither at once," commanded the cardinal, "and, together with him, the pastor of this church."

The chaplain withdrew and entered the room where the clergy were gathered. All eyes were turned towards him. He, with ecstasy still written on his countenance and his mouth still agape, raised his hands, and waving them above his head, exclaimed: "Oh, friends! friends! friends! *hæc mutatio dexterœ Excelsi!*" And for a moment he was speechless. Then, resuming his professional tone of voice, "His illustrious excellency and most reverend lordship desireth his reverence, the pastor of this church and also the pastor of ——"

The first called came forth without delay, and, at the same time, a stifled "I?" came from somewhere in the crowd in a tone of astonishment.

"Are you not the worshipful pastor of ——?" rejoined the chaplain.

"To be sure; but——"

"His illustrious excellency and most reverend lordship desireth your presence."

"Me?" persisted the same voice, implying clearly in that monosyllable: What affair is it of mine? But this time, together with the voice, emerged the man himself,—Don Abbondio in person,—moving his feet by main force and on his face a mingled expression of wonderment and disgust. The chaplain made a gesture, as who should say: Come, brace up; is it such an ordeal? And, preceding the two pastors, he went to the door and ushered them into the adjoining chamber.

The cardinal let go the hand of the Un-named, with whom, meantime, he had agreed concerning what was to be done, and, withdrawing a little to one side, he beckoned the pastor of the place to approach. He put the question at issue before him succinctly, inquiring whether they could find some good woman to go at once to the castle in a litter to get Lucia—a woman of discretion and sensibility, who would know how to acquit herself in so novel an expedition and suit her manner and speech to the task of best cheering and soothing this poor creature, whose liberation, after so much anguish and in such a state of dis-

traction, might be a fresh cause of panic. After a moment's reflection the priest said he had a person pat for the work, and withdrew. The cardinal then beckoned the chaplain to him, and ordered him to have the litter and postilions in readiness and to saddle two mules. Upon the chaplain's leaving he turned to Don Abbondio.

The latter, who was already quite close in order to be the farther removed from the nobleman, and who glanced covertly from one to the other as he tried to puzzle out for himself what could be the occasion of all this manœuvring, now drew still closer, and, making a courtesy, said: "They gave me to understand that your illustrious lordship desired me; but they will have been mistaken, I think."

"They are not mistaken," replied Federigo. "I have good tidings for your ear and a consoling and most sweet office for you to discharge. One of your parishioners whom you will have mourned as lost, Lucia Mondella, is found and is at present near by in the house of this my dear friend. You will now go with him and with a woman whom the pastor here hath gone for—you will go, I say, and accompany this poor waif from your flock back hither."

Don Abbondio tried amain to conceal the annoyance, nay, the sore vexation and bitterness of soul which such a proposal, or command, if so be, brought to him; and, not being in time to relax or dissemble a wry face which he had already made, he hid it by profoundly bowing his head in token of obedience. He only raised it again to make another profound reverence to the Un-named, with a piteous look that seemed to say: I am in thy hands. Be merciful: *parcere subjectis.*

The cardinal next inquired what relatives Lucia possessed.

"Of close kin and living with her none but her mother," answered Don Abbondio.

"And she is at home in the village?"

"Yes, your lordship."

"Forasmuch," resumed Federigo, "as the poor maid cannot be restored to her home so promptly, it will be a great consolation for her to see her mother without delay. Therefore, if the worthy

pastor return not before I go into church, tell him, I prithee, to find a cart or a mount and despatch a man of judgment after the woman and fetch her."

"Were it not better I go myself?"

"No, no; I have already requested other work of you," answered the cardinal.

"My reason was," rejoined Don Abbondio, "that I might break the news to her poor mother. She is a woman of very acute nerves, and 'twould crave some one who knew her and could touch the right chord; else he would do more harm than good."

"And for that reason I beg you to warn the pastor to select a proper man; you are more needed elsewhere," replied the cardinal. He would fain have said: "This poor girl stands in much greater need of at once seeing a familiar face, a safe character, after so many hours of agony in that donjon and in such terrifying suspense as she must feel about the future." But this was not a thing to allege so bluntly before the present listener. It seemed strange to the cardinal, though, that Don Abbondio had not read his real motive between the lines, nay, guessed them himself. He glanced at his face and easily read there its owner's fear of traveling with this frightful companion and of going to that grisly abode even for a few moments. Wishing, therefore, to dissipate these cowardly scruples entirely, and being loath to take the priest aside and whisper to him in the presence of his new-found friend, he conceived that the most opportune means at his disposal was to do that which he would have done even without this reason, that is, to speak to the Un-named himself; and from the latter's replies Don Abbondio would understand once for all that he was no longer a man to inspire fear. So he approached the Un-named, and with that air of spontaneous familiarity which goes with new and powerful friendships, as well as with intimacies of long standing, "Think not," he said, "that I shall be satisfied with one visit today. Thou wilt return, wilt thou not, with this worthy ecclesiastic?"

"Return?" replied the Un-named. "If thou refused to see me, I should still remain obstinately at thy door like a beggar.

I am in need of speaking to thee, of hearing thee, of seeing thee! I need—thee!"

Federigo grasped his hand and said: "Be pleased, then, to dine with us. I shall expect thee. Meanwhile I go to pray and return thanks with my people; thou, to reap the first fruits of mercy."

At these demonstrations Don Abbondio stood by like a timid child, who sees a master confidently patting some great, shaggy mastiff with blood-shot eyes and a notorious name for biting and scaring folk, and hears the man tell what a good-natured dog it is—quiet as a lamb. He regards the master, and neither contradicts nor asserts. He regards the dog, and dares not approach, lest the good-natured animal show his teeth, if only out of sportiveness, nor withdraw, for fear of attracting attention to himself, and in his quandary says: "Oh, were I but safe at home!"

As the cardinal, who walked along with the Un-named still holding his hand, started towards the door, he again noticed Don Abbondio, who hung back, woebegone and reluctant, pulling a long face in spite of himself. Thinking that perhaps his chagrin might also come from his being apparently slighted and left alone in a corner while a malefactor was received so handsomely and affectionately, he turned to him in passing, paused an instant, and with an amiable smile, "Your reverence," he said, "you are with me constantly in the house of our kind Father; but this man—*perierat, et inventus est.*"

"Oh, I am overjoyed!" quoth Don Abbondio, making a low obeisance to both together.

The archbishop walked ahead and pushed at the door, which was promptly opened from within by two servants, one at each side of the threshold, and the strangely assorted pair appeared before the eager eyes of the clergy assembled in the room. One saw depicted on the two countenances emotions equally profound, though of different nature: a tender thankfulness and humble joy on the venerable features of Federigo; on those of the Un-named a confusion tempered by contentment, new-born shame, and a compunction that still did not permit one to forget the

vigor of that untamed and high-strung nature. It became known later on that the words of Isaias had come into the mind of more than one of the onlookers: "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together; the lion and the ox shall eat straw alike." Don Abbondio, to whom no one paid the least heed, followed in their train.

When they were midway in the room, the cardinal's body-servant advanced to say that the commands conveyed by the chaplain had been fulfilled—that the litter and mules were in readiness, and they were waiting only for the woman whom the pastor was to fetch. The cardinal directed that, immediately upon his arrival, the latter was to speak with Don Abbondio, from whom he was thenceforward to receive orders, and from the Un-named, whose hand he again pressed in parting, with the reminder that he would be expected. He turned to greet Don Abbondio, and went off in the direction of the church. The clergy followed after in something between a procession and a mob, and the two traveling-companions remained alone in the apartment.

The Un-named was absorbed, thoughtful, impatient for the moment to come to set his captive free from anxiety and prison, —*his* now in so different a sense from yesterday,—and his countenance wore an expression of feverish abstraction that to the jealous eye of Don Abbondio might well augur something worse. He regarded him askance and would have engaged him in friendly converse; but "What should I say?" he thought. "That I am delighted? Delighted at what? That, having been a fiend in times past, you have at length resolved to turn honest like the rest of folk? A pretty compliment, surely! La! la! la! twist them as I will, congratulations must come to this. And if it were but certain that he is become honest—so abruptly! The world often seeth such demonstrations, on so many pretexts. Perhaps; God knows. In the meantime 'tis my lot to keep him company! to that castle of his! Alack! alack! alack! Had this been foretold me this morning! Hah! if I come out with a whole skin, Mistress Perpetua shall hear from me for bundling me off hither, willy-nilly, without any necessity, outside my own

parish,—all the pastors from far and near would foregather, and I must not stand aloof, and this, and that, and the other,—launching me on an affair like this. Alack-a-day! Still I must needs say something to him."

After considering and reconsidering he at last had hit on a remark which could be ventured, namely, that he had never hoped for the good fortune of falling in with such respectable company, and was just opening his mouth to deliver himself, when the cardinal's body-servant entered with the pastor of the place, who announced that the woman was waiting in the litter. He then turned to Don Abbondio to receive the cardinal's further instructions. Don Abbondio conveyed them as best he could in his confused state of mind, and, accosting the serving-man, "At least," he said, "give me a quiet mount; for, in good troth, I am but a poor horseman."

"Content you," answered the man with a half-grin; "it is a mule of the secretary's, who is of a bookish turn."

" 'Twill serve," replied Don Abbondio, continuing internally: "Heaven send it be gentle!"

The nobleman had strode off hurriedly at the first announcement, then, on reaching the door, he remembered Don Abbondio, who had remained behind. He paused to await him, and, when he came pattering along with an apologetic air, the other bowed and with courtesy and humility of manner made him go before—a circumstance that in some degree composed the nerves of the sorely afflicted priest. But hardly had he set foot in the court-yard when a new portent spoiled this modicum of consolation. He saw the Un-named go to a corner, and, taking the barrel of his carbine in one hand and in the other the leather loop, with a brisk movement as if he were at drill, slung it on his shoulder.

"Ugh!" thought Don Abbondio. "What doth he want with such a plaything as that? Fine hair-shirts and discipline for a convert! And if some whimsy should assail him? Alack! what an errand! what an errand!"

If the nobleman could have suspected what manner of thoughts were passing through the mind of his comrade, one cannot say what he might not have done to reassure him. But

he was a thousand miles from such a suspicion, and Don Abbondio took good heed not to make any move that might be interpreted: Your lordship, I much mistrust thee. On reaching the street they found the two beasts saddled. The Un-named mounted that which was presented to him by a groom.

"He hath no bad habits?" inquired Don Abbondio of the cardinal's man, lowering again the foot that he had already raised towards the stirrup.

"You may mount with an easy mind; it is a very ewe-lamb."

Don Abbondio, clinging to the saddle, was finally hoisted up by the servant inch by inch till finally he was astride.

The litter, which was some paces ahead of them, swung between two mules, started off at the postilion's command, and the convoy departed.

They had first to pass in front of the church, wedged full of people, through a small square, likewise crammed with people either from the village or from outside who had not been able to enter the edifice. The great news had already been bruited abroad; and at the appearance of the cavalcade, at the sight of him who but a few hours ago had been as great an object of terror and execration as he now was of joyful wonderment, a murmur of something like applause arose from the throng, and, while they made room for him to pass, they elbowed and jostled one another to get a closer view of him. The litter came first, then the Un-named. In passing before the wide-open door of the church, he unbonneted himself and bowed that formidable brow down to the very pommel of his saddle, while a whispered "God bless you!" rose from a hundred tongues. Don Abbondio also raised his hat, and bowed, recommending himself to Heaven the while; but on hearing the solemn, full-toned chanting of his confrères he felt such envy, such tender melancholy, such sadness of heart, that it was with difficulty only that he restrained his tears.

Once beyond human habitations in the open country, where the twisting road was at times entirely deserted, a still blacker pall settled down on his thoughts. The only object on which he could rest his glance with confidence was the postilion, who, being

in the service of the cardinal, must be an honest man, and besides, looked to be no coward. From time to time they passed pedestrians, also in groups, who were hurrying to get sight of the cardinal, and this acted as a restorative on Don Abbondio; but this solace passed, and still their steps were bent in the direction of that fearful valley where they would meet none but the subjects of the friend at his shoulder. And such subjects! Now more than ever he would fain have entered into conversation with this friend, as well to sound his intentions as to conciliate his good-will; but, seeing him so wrapped in thought, the inclination fled. Hence he must needs commune with himself. We subjoin only a part of the poor man's soliloquy during this journey, for to transcribe it all would mean to write a book.

" 'Tis a strange fatality that saints, no less than sinners, must have quicksilver in their blood, and, not content with making whirligigs of themselves, must, if they can, set the whole race of Adam awhirl with them—and that the most restless busybodies of all must forever be falling foul of me, who seek no man's company, and lugging me into their affairs by the hair of my head—me, who ask for nothing else than to be left alone! First, that mad knave of a Don Rodrigo! What hindered him from being the happiest man alive, had he only an ounce of mother-wit? Rich, young, respected, courted, his prosperity palls on him, and he must gad about fomenting trouble for himself and for others. He could have trod the primrose path of dalliance; but no, he will take to molesting wenches instead—the most crack-brained, felonious, lunatic trade that man ever plied. He could go to Heaven in a coach-and-six, but he prefers to limp his way to the hob of hell. And then this other here,"—and at this he glanced in his direction, as though he might have overheard his thoughts,—"after turning the world topsyturvy with his rascality must now set it topsyturvy with his repentance, if so be. Meanwhile, I must be the one to try conclusions.

"Well, it's past all help. When they're born such flibbertigibbets, they must be forever making a coil. And doth it cost so sorely to be honest all one's days, like me? But no; they must be slashing, and killing, and marauding—alack the day!—

and then more ado still in repenting! Your true, sincere repentance is a work that can be done quietly at home, without all this pomp and circumstance and this mortal botheration to one's fellow-man. And then his illustrious lordship, too, with his arms straightway opened to embrace him and his 'My good friend! my dear friend!' drinking in everything he saith as though he had seen him work miracles, and rushing headlong into a random course with his eyes closed and all canvas spread to the wind—this, to my poor wit, is over-rash haste, as putting a poor pastor thus in pawn without the least security is very like playing at heads and tails with a man's life. A bishop as holy as he should be as jealous of his priests as of the apple of his eye. A little phlegm, a sprinkling of prudence, a modicum of charity, methinks, may consist very well with sanctity— And if it were all a pretence? Who can sound all the purposes of men? Such men as he, above all? And to think that it is my lot to go with him to his very house! There is like to be some deviltry at the bottom of it—Alack! alack! 'Tis better not to think on't.

"What entanglement is this of Lucia's? Is he, then, in collusion with Don Rodrigo? A murrain on such men! But at least it would make a little daylight. How came she, then, into this man's clutches? Who can tell? 'Tis his lordship's secret; and not a word to me who am led such a merry chase. I would pry into no man's concerns; but, when a man risketh his head, he hath some right to know why. Peace! it may be only to fetch poor Lucia, after all. Though, in that case, he could have brought her himself outright. And besides, if he hath had such a change of heart and is become a Carthusian, where was the need of me? Oh! oh! oh! what a hopeless maze, to be sure! Peace! Please Heaven it may be so: 'twill already be vexation grievous enough, but let it pass. I shall be glad on poor Lucia's account, also. She, too, will have been put upon shamefully. Heaven alone knoweth what she may have suffered. I pity her plight; but she was born to be my undoing— If only I could delve into his heart here and read his thoughts. Who can fathom him? Lo! now he appeareth as 'twere Saint Anthony in the desert, now he looketh a very Holofernes. Alack! alack! woe's

me! Peace! Heaven is pledged to help me out, since I came not in of my own whim."

In fact, one thought chased another across the face of the Un-named, as when on a gusty day the cloud-wracks scud across the sun, deluging the earth at one moment with dazzling light and at the next with a chill twilight gloom. His soul, still inebriated with the tender words of Federigo, and, as it were, rejuvenated, or indeed quite regenerated with a new life, was mounting upwards to the ideas of mercy, of pardon and of love, only to fall back again under the load of his terrible past. His mind torn by anxiety, he was making haste to decide which of his crimes admitted of reparation and which could be aborted, what remedies were safest and most opportune, how to disentangle so many knots, what disposition to make of so many accomplices—it was bewildering to think of! In fancy he reached forward with mingled impatience and anguish to the end of this present expedition, the easiest of all and the nearest to consummation, reflecting that his poor captive was suffering God alone knew what tortures and that he, who was on thorns to liberate her—he it was who meanwhile kept her on the rack. When the road branched, the postilion turned to know which way to proceed. The Un-named pointed out the direction, signaling him at the same time to hurry.

At last they are in the valley. What pen shall describe the feelings of Don Abbondio now? That far-famed valley of which he had heard so many horrible tales; and now to be within its precincts! Those notorious brigands, the flower of the bravos of Italy, those men sans fear and sans mercy; and now to behold them in the flesh, to meet one, two, three of them at every turn of the road. They bowed a submissive head to the nobleman; but oh! the menace that was conveyed to Don Abbondio by those weather-beaten faces, those bristling mustachios, those dark glances, which seemed to say: Welcome to your entertainment, sir priest! To such a point, indeed, did his feelings at length prevail that, at the very climax of his consternation, "Had I married them," he murmured to himself, "I could have fared no whit worse." Meanwhile they pressed on over a rocky path

alongside the mountain torrent, with rugged desert cliffs frowning on one side of them, and on the other a tribe of inhabitants that made any desert desirable. Dante was in no worse case in the midst of Malebolge.

In passing before the Malanotte they were acknowledged, the cavalier by obeisances, his companion and the litter by the inquiring glances of some desperate-looking bravos grouped about the doorway. The latter were at a loss what to think. The departure that morning of the Un-named without attendants had already been an innovation; this was no less so. Was it some quarry he was bringing home? If so, how had he run it down alone? And whose was the strange litter? And whose livery was the postilion wearing? They looked and looked, but none budged; for such was the command they read in the glance of the master.

They climb the ascent. They gain the summit. The bravos on the esplanade and before the gate fall back to the right and left to make way, but the Un-named beckons them to make no further move. Putting the spurs to his mount, he rides on ahead of the litter, motioning the postilion and Don Abbondio to follow. From one courtyard he passes to a second and makes towards a small doorway, waving back a bravo who runs up to hold his stirrup. "Stand thou here," he says, "and let no one pass." Dismounting, he hurriedly ties his beast to an iron bar and approaches the litter, the woman having now drawn the curtain. "Make haste to bring her consolation," he says to the goodwife in an undertone. "Assure her that she is free and in the hands of friends. And God reward thee!" He then beckoned the postilion to open the litter, and, approaching Don Abbondio with a more serene expression than the latter had yet seen on that countenance, or indeed deemed possible, transfigured as it was with the joy of the good deed that at length neared consummation, "Your reverence," he said, still in an undertone, "I ask not pardon of thee for the inconvenience which I cause thee. Thou dost it for One who payeth well and for this poor distressed child of His." So saying, he seized the bridle with

one hand and the stirrup with another to assist Don Abbondio to the ground.

That look, together with the words and the bearing which accompanied it, recalled Don Abbondio to life. He heaved a sigh, which for the past hour had been wambling in his interior vainly seeking a vent, bowed to the Un-named and replied in the faintest of whispers: "Pardon? of me? Nay, nay, nay, nay—" and down he slid, as best he might, from the saddle. The Un-named tied up his beast likewise, and, indicating to the postilion that he remain there waiting, he took from his pocket a key, with which he opened the door. He entered, leading Don Abbondio and the woman and conducting them to a stairway, which they all three mounted in silence.

Chapter XXIV

Lucia had awakened only a short time before, and part of that time had been painfully consumed in trying to separate the troubled visions of sleep from the recollections and the present memorials of a reality only too closely resembling the horrors of a fever-patient's dream. The beldame had at once approached, and in that same tone of constrained humility, "Ah! you have slept?" she had said. "You might have done so abed, as I besought you so often last night." Receiving no reply, "Now you must eat," she had continued, always in accents of peevish entreaty. "Come, be wise. Ugh! how haggard you look! You are starved. And must I be taxed for your folly, when he returns, I prithee?"

"Nay, nay, nay; I will away, I will to my mother. The master so promised. 'Tomorrow morning,' he said. Where is the master?"

"Abroad. He hath said he will return soon and grant your behests."

"He hath said so? he hath said so? Then will I to my mother—this very instant."

At this juncture footfalls sounded in the adjoining chamber, followed by a tapping at the door. The beldame ran at the sound, inquiring who rapped.

"Open up," replied the well-known voice in subdued accents. The dame drew the bolt, and the Un-named, pushing the door ajar by a slight pressure of his hand, summoned forth the crone and admitted Don Abbondio and the matron. He pulled it to after them and remained just outside, despatching the ancient minion to some remote part of the castle, as he had already done with the other female attendant who had been watching at the door.

The stir incidental to these movements, together with the momentary suspense and the appearance of newcomers, brought

a fresh fit of panic to Lucia, to whom, intolerable and all as was her present situation, every change was a signal for suspicion and fresh alarm. She looked, and, seeing no one but a priest and a woman, her spirits rose. She looked more intently. Did her eyes deceive her? At last, recognizing Don Abbondio, she stood staring like one under a spell. The woman, coming up, bent over her with a look of pity, and taking hold of her hands by way of caressing her and raising her to her feet at the same time, "Oh! my poor child!" she said. "Come with us; come along."

"Who are ye?" demanded Lucia. But without pausing for a reply she again turned towards Don Abbondio, who stood a few paces off, compassion reigning likewise on his countenance. She riveted her eyes on him anew, exclaiming: "He? Can it be he?—my own pastor? Where are we?—Alack! alack! I am losing my reason."

"No, no," responded Don Abbondio; "it is I in sober truth. Be of good cheer. We are come to take you away, d'ye see? It is your own very pastor, come hither a-purpose—on horseback——"

Lucia, as if recovering her full strength on the moment, started to her feet, and fixing her gaze once more upon those friendly faces, "It is the Madonna, then," she said, "that hath sent you."

" 'Tis my own belief," answered the matron.

"But can we depart, can we depart in very truth?" rejoined Lucia, lowering her voice and glancing about her with a look of timidity and suspicion. "And all those people—?" she continued, her lips contracted in a spasm of fear and horror—"and that nobleman? that person I saw here?—He had already promised me——"

"He is here, too, come a-purpose with us," quoth Don Abbondio. "He waits without. Use despatch. Let us not detain him, one of his rank."

Thereupon the object of their discourse pushed open the door and looked in. Lucia, who a few moments before had longed to see him, nay, having no hope in anything else under the sun, longed for nothing else but him, now, after seeing

friendly faces and hearing friendly voices, could not restrain a feeling of revulsion. She started, gasped, and clung to the matron, hiding her face in her bosom. The Un-named, at the sight of those features which he had not been able to regard steadfastly last evening and which prolonged suffering and hunger had rendered still more unkempt, wasted and harried than before, had stood as if transfixed on the threshold. Now, observing her attitude of terror, he dropped his eyes to the ground and remained for a moment longer motionless and mute. Then, replying to that which the poor terrified damsel had not put into words, " 'Tis true," he said; "pardon me."

"He cometh to set you free. He is no longer the man you knew; he hath changed his ways. Hear you not that he asketh pardon?" the woman whispered into Lucia's ear.

"What need to say more? Come, raise that frontlet. A truce to all babyishness, that we may depart incontinently," Don Abbondio was saying. Lucia, raising her head and seeing that proud forehead bowed, those flashing eyes vailed and abashed, moved by mingled sentiments of relief, of gratitude and pity, "Oh, my noble deliverer!" she said, "may God reward thee for thy mercy!"

"And thee, a hundredfold, for the good those words have done me."

So saying, he turned towards the door and led the way out. Lucia, now completely revived, followed with the good woman, who lent her her arm. Don Abbondio brought up the rear. Descending the stairs, they came to the courtyard entrance. The Un-named threw it open, and, approaching the litter, he opened the door and with a gentleness bordering on timidity (two new traits in his character) he handed in, first Lucia, and after her the matron. He then untied Don Abbondio's mule and helped the priest into the saddle.

"Oh, what condescension!" he said, and mounted much more nimbly than in the first instance. The convoy started as soon as the Un-named was astride. His brow was once more erect, his eye had resumed its wonted cast of command. The bravos whom they met read on his face the signs of deep thought, extraordi-

nary preoccupation, but nothing more. At the castle nothing had as yet transpired of the master's great transformation, and certainly no one could have reached such a conclusion by mere conjecture.

The goodwife had at once drawn the curtains of the litter. Then, affectionately taking Lucia's hands in her own, she proceeded to comfort her with words of sympathy, of congratulation and endearment. Perceiving that, in addition to the weariness consequent upon her sufferings, her confusion of mind and ignorance of what was taking place about her prevented the luckless creature from feeling the full measure of satisfaction which her escape warranted, she communicated to her the circumstances which seemed fittest to disentangle her ideas and put them in good train once again. She named the village for which they were bound.

"Truly?" said Lucia, who knew that it was not far from her own. "Ah, holy Virgin, I thank thee! Oh, mother, mother, mother!"

"We shall send for her at once," said the good woman, not knowing that it was already done.

"Yes, yes, do so; and God reward you—And you, kind dame, who are you and how came you hither?"

"Our pastor hath sent me," said the goodwife; "for that this nobleman, God hath touched his heart (blessed be His name!) and down he cometh to our village to speak with the worshipful cardinal archbishop (we have him with us on a visit, good holy man), and so he repents him of his sinfulness and would mend his life, and tells the cardinal how that he hath abducted a poor innocent creature, which you are the very one, in conspiracy with another miscreant, that the pastor hath not said who it can be."

Lucia raised her eyes to heaven.

"Belike you know him yourself," continued the worthy woman. "No matter. And so, thinks the cardinal, a young woman being in question, we must have a matron go along for company, and he bids the pastor seek one. And so the pastor, in his goodness, cometh after me——"

"Oh! the Lord requite thy charity!"

"Tut, tut, tut, poor lass. And so, says his worshipful reverence to me, I must hearten you, and try out of hand to allay your fears, and explain to you that the Lord hath delivered you by a miracle——"

"Ah, yes, a miracle in truth; by the Madonna's intercession."

"And so, says he, your mind was to be easy, and to pardon him that hath done you scathe, and be well content that God hath dealt mercifully with him, even to praying for his weal; for that thus, besides reaping merit above, your heart will be the lighter."

Lucia answered with a look that promised assent as clearly as words and with a sweetness that words could never possess.

"That's a good lass," resumed the goodwife. "And, your pastor being in the village, too (such a swarm of them are come from all round about that it might be four general councils rolled into one), his worship the cardinal bethinks himself to send him along for company; but he hath stood us in little stead. 'Tis not the first time I had heard what a feckless creature he is, but in this instance I could see for myself that he is more helpless than a chick in hemp."

"And this other—" inquired Lucia, "this man who hath had a change of heart—who is he?"

"What! You know not?" quoth the worthy matron; and she told his name.

"Oh! God of mercy!" exclaimed Lucia. That name! How often had she not shuddered at hearing it pronounced in more tales than one, in which it invariably figured like that of the ogre in folk-lore! And now at the thought of having been in his terrible power and of being actually the object of his pity and protection, at the thought of so horrible a plight and so unexpected a rescue, at the thought of whose countenance it was she had seen pass from ferocity to compassion and from compassion to humility, she remained like one in a trance, only, from time to time, repeating: "God of mercy!"

"He hath had mercy indeed!" the worthy woman was commenting. "It will be a great relief to half Christendom. To think of all the lives he kept in turmoil; and now, as our pastor

hath said— Nay, even to look at his face, he is become a saint. His works will follow shortly."

It would not be true to say that this good woman felt no curiosity to know more particularly of the great adventure in which she was playing a part. But it must be said to her credit that, restrained by her respectful sympathy for Lucia and impressed with the gravity and dignity of the responsibility that had been entrusted to her, it did not even enter her head to make one indiscreet or superfluous inquiry. All her words during that journey were words of comfort and of solicitude for the afflicted damsel beside her.

"Heaven alone knows when you last ate!"

"I do not remember—a good stretch since."

"Poor child! You need refreshment."

" 'Tis true," replied Lucia, faintly.

"We shall find something or other at my house presently, thanks be to God. Take heart of grace; 'tis but a step now."

Lucia then sank down into the litter, as if overcome by drowsiness, and the worthy matron left her undisturbed.

As for Don Abbondio, the return was certainly not so agonizing as the going had been; yet was it not a pleasure-trip. His first overpowering fear being laid, he felt entirely disembarrassed for a few moments; but a hundred new worries speedily began to loom up on the horizon—as, when some great tree is uprooted, the ground beneath remains unencumbered for a space, then becomes all overgrown with weeds. He had become more sensible of other considerations, and in the circumstances of the present, as well as in speculations on the future, there was no dearth of matter for self-torment. He now felt the inconvenience of this, to him, unwonted manner of travel more than in the morning, especially at the beginning, in making the descent from the castle into the valley. The postilion, his industry stimulated by sundry signals from the Un-named, drove his team at a good round pace, and the other two animals trotted after at the same gait, with the result that at the steepest spots poor Don Abbondio was pitched forward as though a lever had been applied from behind and was obliged to brace himself against the pommel

of the saddle for support. Still he durst not ask that the speed be slackened, and besides, he would fain have been clear of the country as quickly as possible. To make matters worse, his mule, after the fashion of its kind, seemed to take a spiteful pleasure in keeping to the outside of the road, when this ran along a bank or terrace, and planting his hoof on the very brink, so that Don Abbondio could look almost perpendicularly down what was really only the matter of a good leap, but what to him appeared a precipice. "Thou, too," he silently apostrophized his beast, "hast this accursed craze of going out of the way after danger, when the path is so broad!" And he jerked the bridle, but to no purpose.

It ended, as it usually did end with him, by his digesting his rage and fear and doing as the good pleasure of others dictated. The bravos did not terrify him so much, now that he knew their master's mind with great certainty. "But," he reflected next, "how will they take it, I wonder, if the news of his conversion becomes bruited about while we are still here? Heaven knows what will come of it! If they chose to imagine that I came to play the missionary! Alack! alack! I would be martyred." His companion's frown no longer annoyed him. "It needs nothing less," he reflected, "to keep those varlets in hand. I understand that as well as another. But why should it fall to my lot to be thrown in with such a crew?"

But we must spare the reader. Suffice it to say that at length they reached the bottom, and in good time left the valley behind. The countenance of the Un-named cleared apace. Don Abbondio's features, also, regained something like composure; he dislodged his head, which had become wedged between his shoulders, relaxed the rigidity of his arms and legs; his back resumed a normal vertebrate shape, making him appear a totally different being; his breath came more easily, and in his newly acquired peace of soul he proceeded to contemplate the dangers in the offing.

"Whatever will Don Rodrigo say now? the blackguard! No need to ask what a bitter dose it will be for him to have his nose put out of joint in this fashion, with all his trouble for his

pains, and ridicule to boot. This is when he will run amuck in good earnest. Wait and see whether I am not taken to task for being mixed up with this little excursion. If he had the hardihood then to send those two imps of his to play me such a caper on the highway, what will he not do now? He cannot call his illustrious lordship to a reckoning—he's a bigger nob than himself—there he must gnaw the rein. Meanwhile the spleen remains in his system and he must vent it on someone. What is the upshot in such cases? The under dog always gets the kicks. His illustrious lordship will see to it, as by right he should, that Lucia is placed in safety. The other luckless wight is out of range and has, besides, already paid his shot. So I become the under dog. It would be barbarous that, after so much trouble and stress for which I receive not a whit of credit, I should now be made the scapegoat.

"What will his illustrious lordship do to defend me after putting my head in the noose? Can he be my surety that that hell-hound will not serve me more scurvily than before? And then, his head is so full; he hath so many irons in the fire. How can he give heed to everything? At times they leave the snarl worse than they find it. These doers of good do it all in a lump. When they have savored the satisfaction of it, they have enough and will by no means be bored by shouldering the consequences. Whereas those whose taste runs to wrong-doing use more diligence. They follow up their deviltry to the end of the chapter and forego all rest, because the canker keeps eating away. Ought I go and explain that I am come hither by the express command of his illustrious excellency and not of my own volition? 'Twould then appear as if I took sides with iniquity. Heaven be praised! I take sides with iniquity! After all the mortal botheration it hath brought on me! Well, well; the best plan will be to relate the matter to Perpetua just as it stands, and leave it to Perpetua then to set it a-traveling. If so be that his lordship doth not get some maggot for publicity in his head and make a useless scene and drag me in in spite of all. At all events, the very first thing I shall do upon our return will be to go and pay my hurried respects, if they have left the church; if not,

I shall leave my excuses and start for home out of hand. Lucia is in good hands; I am no longer needed, and after so many hardships I can pretend to some rest as well as another. And then—if only his lordship doth not take it into his head to learn the whole story and call me to an account for the marriage business! That were the last straw of all. And if he comes a-visiting my parish, too!— Oh! if it's to be, 'twill be; I'll not bring confusion on myself before time; I've troubles a-plenty now. For the present I shall mew myself up at home. As long as his lordship is in these parts, Don Rodrigo will not be brazen enough to go on a rampage. And then—and then? Ah! I see my last years are to be stormy."

The convoy arrived before the services in church were concluded. It traversed the same crowd, whose excitement continued undiminished, and then split in two. The horsemen turned into the adjacent area, at the bottom of which stood the home of the pastor; the litter continued on towards the goodwife's own home.

Don Abbondio did as he had planned. Hardly had he dismounted when he paid his most effusive respects to the Un-named, whom he begged convey his excuses to his lordship—that he must needs return forthwith to his parish on pressing business. He went in search of what he called his mare, that is the staff he had left in a corner of the parlor, and set out upon his way. The Un-named remained waiting till the cardinal should leave the church.

Lucia's conductress, having installed her in the coziest place in the kitchen, was busy preparing some refreshment, repelling in her bluff, kind-hearted way the thanks and excuses which her guest would renew every few moments.

With lightning speed she had some kindling under the pot, where a fair capon was swimming, and soon the broth was brought to a boil. Filling up a plate, already garnished with bread-crusts, she was at length able to make her offering to Lucia. Seeing the poor damsel revive with each spoonful, she went on congratulating herself aloud that the occurrence had taken place on a day, when, as she said, there was something on the hearth

besides the cat. "Every one maketh some shift at junketing today," she added, "except the poor destitute creatures who are hard put to it to get even bread of vetches and hasty-pudding. Howsoever today they are all looking forward to a dole from a man of such charity. We are not in their case, thank God. What with my goodman's trade and a trifle of property, we manage to live. So, eat without scruple the while, and soon the capon will be done, and then you can fortify yourself to more purpose." So saying, she turned her attention once again to preparing the dinner and laying the covers.

Lucia in the meantime, her strength being somewhat recruited and her fears abating momentarily, proceeded from an instinctive habit of cleanliness and modesty to set her person to rights, plaiting and securing her loose, dishevelled tresses and readjusting the kerchief about her breast and throat. In doing so her fingers encountered the rosary she had hung there the preceding night. Her glance sought the same object. Tumult instantly filled her soul. The recollection of her vow, suppressed up to this point and crowded out by the emotions of the moment, suddenly revived and stood out clear and distinct. All the powers of her soul, as yet barely reestablished, were again thrown into instant consternation, and, if that soul had not been so well prepared by a life of innocence, resignation and trustful faith, this consternation would have been despair. After the first ebullition of thoughts which come not paired with words, the earliest sentiment to take articulate shape in her mind was: "Woe's me! What have I done?"

But scarcely had the thought been conceived than it appalled her. She called to mind all the circumstances of the vow—the intolerable anguish, the hopelessness of any succor, the fervor of her prayers, the sincerity of the sentiment with which she had made the promise. And now, after obtaining the favor, to repent of her promise appeared like sacrilegious ingratitude and perfidy towards God and the Madonna. Such infidelity, it seemed to her, would bring in its wake other and still more terrible misfortunes, amid which she could hope no longer in prayer; and she hastened to disavow her momentary regrets. She took the

rosary from around her neck, and holding it in her trembling hand, confirmed and renewed her vow, begging at the same time, with heart-broken entreaty, that she be given the strength to keep it and be spared such thoughts and encounters as might, if not unsettle her resolution, at least assail her peace of mind too rudely.

Renzo's absence with no prospect of his returning, which up to the present had been so bitter a trial, now seemed like a dispensation of Providence, Which had coupled the two circumstances together with one end in view; and she sought to find in the one a reason for being satisfied with the other. From thinking thus she proceeded to reason that this same Providence, to complete Its work, would find the means to reconcile Renzo in turn, lest he think too much—But no sooner was such a solution discovered than it created havoc in the mind which had sought it. The hapless girl, feeling her heart to be on the verge of fresh regrets, returned to prayer, to protestation, to combat; from which she arose (if the expression will pass muster) like a victor, wounded and weary, triumphing over an enemy he has overthrown—I say not slain.

All at once there was a sound of footsteps and the clatter of glad voices. It was the family returning from church. Two little tots of girls and a young boy bounded into the house. They paused an instant to glance curiously at Lucia, then ran to the mother and stood grouped around her. One asks the name of the unknown, and the why and wherefore of her visit; another is for recounting the wonders it has witnessed—the good woman has only one reply to it all: "Hush! hush!" Then, at a quieter gait, but with cordial solicitude written on his features, came the master of the house. He was, if we have not yet stated it, the tailor of the hamlet and the country round about—a man who knew how to read—who had, in fact, read more than once the Legendary of the Saints, *Il Guerrin Meschino* and *I Reali di Francia*,[1] and who passed in his neighborhood for a man of

[1] [Two prose romances by Andrea da Barberino, the latter aiming to cover the history of the Carlovingian dynasty, but embracing in fact only the youth of Charlemagne.—TRANSLATOR.]

parts and learning; an encomium which he modestly repelled, however, saying only that he had missed his vocation and that, had he gone in for study in place of many an other—! For all that he was the best creature in the world. Happening to be with his spouse when she had been requested by the pastor to undertake the errand of mercy, not only had he approved, but he would likewise have given encouragement had there been any need. Now that the services, the ceremonial, the crowds, and, above all, the cardinal's sermon, had exalted all his good sentiments, he was returning home with a breathless anxiety and yearning to know how the matter had sped and to find the poor innocent victim in safety.

"See whom we have," quoth his helpmeet to him upon his entrance, pointing to Lucia. The latter blushed, and, rising from her place, began to stammer excuses. But he, advancing to meet her, interrupted her apologies with his enthusiastic reception, "Thrice welcome! thrice welcome!" he exclaimed. "You are a blessing from Heaven upon this house. How glad I am to see you here. 'Twas already past doubting with me that you would have reached some good haven; because I have never found where the Lord began a miracle without finishing it well; but I am pleased to see you e'en here. Poor lass! Still 'tis much to be the object of a miracle."

Nor let it be thought that he was alone in thus qualifying the occurrence because he had read the Legendary. In all the hamlet and the surrounding country no other terms were used in speaking of it as long as the recollection of it survived. Indeed, to say sooth, embroidered as it came to be, no other word would have suited.

Then, sidling up to his wife, who was lifting the pot from its hook, "Hath all gone well?" he inquired in an undertone.

"Like a charm. I'll tell you more anon."

"Yes, yes; time enough."

Depositing her savory burden upon the table, the mistress of the house then went for Lucia and led her to a seat at the table, after which she separated a wing from the fowl and set it before her. Then she and her husband seated themselves also and

both encouraged their dejected and shamefaced guest to eat. The tailor began, at the first mouthful, to hold forth with great emphasis amid the interruptions of the children, who stood about the table eating and who had, in fact, seen too many extraordinary things that day to keep for any great length of time to the rôle of listeners. He would describe the solemn ceremonial, then digress to speak of the miraculous conversion. But that which had impressed him most deeply and to which he returned oftenest was the cardinal's sermon.

"To see him there before the altar," he would say, "a noble of his rank, like a parish priest——"

"And with that gold hat on his head—" would say one of the little fairies.

"Hold your tongue. To think, I say, that a noble of his rank and so great a scholar, for they say he hath read all the books in the world—and that is something never yet compassed by any other, even in Milan—to think that he can accommodate himself to speak so that all can understand——"

"I understood, too," said another little chatterbox.

"Hold your tongue! What could such as you understand?"

"I understood that he was explaining the Gospel instead of our pastor."

"Hold your tongue! I don't speak of such as have the learning, for then one hath no choice but to understand; but even the greatest numbskulls and lack-wits followed the thread of the discourse. 'Tis true they would cudgel their brains in vain, were you to go to them now and ask them to repeat his own words; but the sense of it they have laid up here. And without once mentioning yon nobleman by name, how well one understood whom he meant! But, in faith, to understand it, it needed only to behold the tears in his eyes. Then such weeping as the congregation——"

"Honest truth," blurted out the lad. "But why did they weep so, like babies?"

"Hold your tongue. Still there be hard enough hearts in the community. And he hath made it so clear that, though there be a dearth, still we should bless the Lord and be content—do

what is to be done, work steadily, make what shift we can, and then be content. Because the misfortune is not in being poor or in suffering; the misfortune is in doing evil. And with him these are not fine words, for 'tis a known fact that he liveth the life of a poor man himself and taketh the bread from his own mouth to give to the hungry, when he might live delicately better than any. Ah! such a man, what a satisfaction it is to hear him discourse, when 'tis not, 'Do as I say,' like so many of them, but 'Do as I do.' But also he hath shewn that those who are not of gentle birth but have beyond their needs are bound to share with those who suffer want."

Here he broke off of his own accord, as though overtaken by some thought. He remained pondering an instant, then, making up a plate of the viands spread before him and adding thereto a loaf of bread, he put the whole into a napkin which he grasped by the four corners and handed to the elder of the little girls. Putting into her other hand a flask of wine, "Take these," said he, "over to the widow Mary's hard by, and tell her it is a trifle with which to make merry with the children. But with a good grace, see you; lest you might seem to be giving an alms. Say naught to any one you may meet, and take heed that nothing be broken."

Lucia felt the tears gather to her eyes and a wave of tenderness refresh her heart, just as the preceding discourse had ministered to her a balm that direct sympathy could not have produced. Captivated by the tailor's descriptions, the pictured pomp, the contagious emotions of pity and wonder, fascinated by the enthusiasm of the narrator himself, her soul was beguiled away from painful thoughts about herself, and, though they returned, she now found herself stronger to cope with them. Even the thought of her great sacrifice, while it had not lost its bitterness, became transfused with a certain austere and solemn joy.

Shortly afterwards the village pastor came in, saying that he had been despatched by the cardinal to get tidings of Lucia and to inform her that his lordship wished to see her later in the day, and finally, to convey his thanks to the tailor and his wife. Both Lucia and her hosts were so moved and embarrassed that

they could find no words to acknowledge such attentions from so great a personage.

"And your mother is not yet come?" said the priest to Lucia.

"My mother!" exclaimed she.

Upon the pastor's explaining that she had been sent for by order of the archbishop, she hid her face in her apron and burst into uncontrollable weeping, which continued for some minutes after the reverend messenger had taken his departure. When the tumult of emotions which this announcement had raised began to give way to calmer considerations, the hapless maid remembered that this approaching consolation of seeing her mother—a consolation so unexpected a brief time before—had been expressly prayed for in those terrible hours in the castle and almost stipulated as the price of her vow. "Bring me back safe to my mother" had she said; and the words now stood out clean-cut in her memory. She resolved more strongly than ever to keep her promise and repented again, and more contritely than before, that "Woe's me!" that had escaped her in the first moment of her weakness.

Agnese, in fact, as they talked of her, was not far away. One can easily fancy how the poor woman was affected at so unexpected a summons and at the intimation, necessarily meagre and confused, of some dreadful but now (so much could be stated) averted danger—a terrible misadventure, which the messenger could neither particularize nor explain; and she had no clue by which to explain it herself. After some clawing of her hair and frantic invocations to God and the Madonna, after some plying of the messenger with further questions, to none of which could he make any reply, she bolted into the cart and continued her bootless queries and ejaculations as they went their way. At a certain point they met Don Abbondio plodding along and leaning on his staff at every step. After a mutual cry of surprise he paused, and she called a halt and dismounted. They drew aside into a chestnut-grove that flanked the road. Don Abbondio rendered an account of what he had been able to learn and constrained to see. It was not clear; but at least Agnese was assured that Lucia was safe, and she breathed a sigh of relief.

Next Don Abbodio wished to broach another matter. He was for expatiating upon the manner of demeaning herself with the archbishop, if he, as was likely, desired to have conversation with her and Lucia. Above all, it would be amiss to let fall any hint of the marriage— But Agnese, divining that the good man spoke only in his own interest, had turned on her heel and left him without promising aught or, indeed, resolving aught either, being otherwise preoccupied. So she resumed her journey.

At length the cart arrived and drew up before the tailor's. Lucia jumped to her feet. Agnese alighted and rushed into the house and into her daughter's arms. The tailor's helpmeet, who was the only bystander, spoke words of cheer, of reassurance and congratulation to both mother and daughter, and then, discreet always, left them to themselves, saying that she was going to prepare their bed; that it meant no inconvenience; that, in any event, both she and her husband had liefer sleep on the floor than permit them to seek shelter elsewhere.

The first burst of tenderness and sobbing being over, Agnese desired to hear of Lucia's adventures, and Lucia proceeded painfully to recount them. But, as the reader already is aware, it was a story that no one knew in its entirety; and for Lucia herself there were some pages of it utterly dark and inexplicable. Particularly was this the case as regarded the fateful coincidence of the dreaded coach standing there in the road just as Lucia was passing along by an extraordinary chance. Upon this point mother and daughter hazarded a hundred conjectures, without once hitting the mark or even coming close.

As to the prime mover in the intrigue, neither could refrain from thinking it to have been Don Rodrigo.

"Ah! the black-hearted wretch! The fire-brand of hell!" exclaimed Agnese. "But his day will come, too. The Lord God will requite him according to his just deserts, and then he too will feel——"

"Nay, nay, mother; nay!" interrupted Lucia. "Wish him not suffering, to him nor to any one. If you knew what it is to suffer! If you had felt its pangs! No, rather let us pray God and His Mother for him, that God may touch his heart, as He hath

already touched this other nobleman's, who was worse than Don Rodrigo and now is become a saint."

The repugnance that Lucia felt in rehearsing memories so recent and so cruel made her pause more than once. More than once she declared that her courage was not equal to continuing the tale, and after many tears she resumed speaking only with the greatest effort. But a different impulse made her hesitate at one point in her narrative—when she had come to her vow. She was now restrained by a fear that her parent would tax her with imprudence and precipitateness; or that, as she had done in regard to the marriage, she would bring forward some of her broad rules of conscience and constrain her to approve them by force; or that (poor soul!) she would tell the secret to some one in confidence, if for no other reason than to get light and counsel, and so the matter would become public property. This was an eventuality the very thought of which made Lucia's cheek turn crimson. There was not lacking, either, a diffidence of her own mother, an inexplicable aversion to discuss such matters at all. All these considerations together operated to make her conceal so important a detail, resolving to take Father Christoforo into her confidence first of all. What a blow, then, to her hopes, when, on asking news of him, she learned that he was no longer at Pescarenico, that he had been sent to a distant town, that the town had one of those outlandish names—and that was all!

"And Renzo!" quoth Agnese.

"He is safe, is he not?" anxiously inquired Lucia.

"That much is certain, since all agree to it. 'Tis held for sure that he hath taken refuge on Bergamask soil, but the precise place no one can say, and up to the present he hath sent never a word. For the lack of means, belike."

"Ah! if he be safe, Heaven be praised!" said Lucia, and sought to change the subject, when it was changed by a new development—the appearance of the cardinal archbishop.

On returning from church, where we left him, he had learned from the Un-named that Lucia was arrived safe and sound. Then they had gone together to the table, the prelate making the nobleman sit at his right amid a galaxy of priests, who could not sate

their eyes with the sight of that countenance so subdued without a trace of weakness, so humbled without a single abject note, nor ever tire of comparing him with the notion they had long entertained of his character.

The dinner over, the two had again retired in private. After a colloquy which lasted much longer than the first the Un-named had set out for the castle on his mount of the morning, and the cardinal, summoning the pastor, had announced that he wished to be shown to the house where Lucia had taken refuge.

"Oh! your lordship," the pastor had remonstrated, "spare yourself the inconvenience. I shall send word incontinently to have the damsel come hither, her mother, if she be arrived, her hosts also, if your lordship wishes, and whomsoever your illustrious lordship desireth."

"I desire to go to them," Federigo had rejoined.

"Your illustrious lordship should spare himself this bother. I shall send for them at once. 'Tis but the work of a minute," insisted the officious ecclesiastic (a good man otherwise), not comprehending that the cardinal wished by this visit to honor misfortune, innocence, hospitality and his own ministry at one and the same time. But, the superior again intimating the same desire, his subordinate bowed and started off.

When the two churchmen appeared in the street, all the bystanders turned in their direction, and in a few moments newcomers arrived from every side, those who could, walking abreast, the others following after helter-skelter. The pastor expostulated with them. "Be off with you," he commanded. "Fall back! Stand aside! Fie, fie!"

"Let be," Federigo directed, as he passed on, now raising his hand to bless the people, now lowering it to caress the children who beset his path.

In such wise they arrived at the tailor's and went in, the crowd remaining outside and swelling constantly. But in the thick of the crowd was no less a person than the tailor himself, who had followed along with the rest, his mouth agape and eyes astare, knowing not whither he was bound. When it turned out to be this particular objective, he commanded the others to

make way, the reader is left to imagine how vociferously, bawling out again and again: "Make way for him who hath right of way," and so he entered.

Agnese and Lucia heard an increasing rumble in the street, and, as they were wondering what it might be, they saw the housedoor open and the cardinal and parish priest appear on the threshold.

"Is that she?" asked the former, and, at an affirmative sign from the other, he went up to Lucia, who had remained just as she was with her mother, both of them speechless and frozen stiff with surprise and embarrassment. But the tone of voice, the aspect, the demeanor, above all the words of Federigo, soon restored their animation. "Poor lass," he began; "God hath permitted thee to be sorely tried, but He hath also given proof that His eye never ceased to be upon thee, that He hath not forgotten thee. He hath restored thee to safety, and at the same time made use of thee to accomplish a work of great mercy to one of His children and to comfort many another."

Here the goodwife appeared upon the scene. At the first rumor she had looked out at the window, and, seeing who was entering, she had made haste to descend after rearranging her dress as well as circumstances permitted. At almost the same instant the tailor entered at another door. Perceiving the conversation to be under weigh, they withdrew to a corner and remained respectfully silent. The cardinal, after bowing to them, went on speaking with the two women, interspersing his sympathies with certain questions, if perchance from their replies he might learn some opportunity of helping one who had suffered so greatly.

" 'Twere meet that all priests were like your lordship, taking sides with the poor and not helping to intrigue them to save their own skins," said Agnese, encouraged by Federigo's amiable and familiar bearing, and piqued by the thought that the brave Don Abbondio, after always sacrificing others to his own interests, pretended even on top of it to forbid them some little indemnification, when they had so rare a chance to complain before one who was his master.

"Hesitate not to speak your mind," said the cardinal; "talk freely."

"I would say that if our pastor had done as he ought, matters would not have gone thus."

But then, the cardinal importuning her to explain more freely, she began to find some embarrassment in having to tell a tale in which she, too, played a rôle that she was loath to divulge, more particularly to such a personage as the present. But she hit upon a way of saving the situation by a compromise; she recounted the projected marriage, the refusal of Don Abbondio, not omitting that pretext about superiors which he had brought forward (ah, Agnese!), and then skipped to Don Rodrigo's attempted outrage and to their flight from home, as though they had been warned of their danger.

"But so it is," she subjoined and concluded; "flight led only to new entanglements. Whereas, if his reverence had only frankly told us the case and married my poor children outright, we had gone off all together forthwith to some distant parts, where even the air of heaven would not have been any the wiser of it. Thus time was lost, and thus betided what hath betided."

"His reverence shall render me an account of his actions," said the cardinal.

"No, your lordship, no," quickly rejoined Agnese. 'Tis not for that I have spoken. Reprimand him not, because what's done is done. And then, it skills nothing; he's as the Lord made him. If the same case arose again, 'twould be the same story."

But Lucia, not being satisfied with such a version of their case, added: "We, too, have done wrong. 'Tis plain that God willed it should not succeed."

"What wrong could you have done, poor maid?" asked Federigo.

Lucia, despite her mother's surreptitious winks, related the tale of their experiment in the house of Don Abbondio, and, in conclusion, "We have done wrong," she said, "and God hath chastised us."

"Accept from His hand the sufferings you have endured and

be of good heart," said Federigo; "because who have just cause to hope and rejoice if not such as suffer and then think to accuse themselves?"

He then inquired the whereabouts of her lover, and, learning from Agnese (Lucia remained silent, with downcast eyes) that he had fled the country, his face showed the surprise and disappointment which he felt at such tidings, and he wished to know the reason.

Agnese related as best she could the little she knew of Renzo's adventure.

"I have heard tell of this youth," said his lordship; "but how could one implicated in such matters have won the hand of a maid like this?"

"He was a God-fearing youth," said Lucia, her face turning scarlet, but with a firm voice.

"He was staid enough—too staid in sooth," added Agnese; "and of this your lordship can inquire of no matter whom, even our worshipful pastor. Heaven only knoweth what broil they may have trumped on him. It needeth but little to make poor folk out to be knaves."

" 'Tis only too true," said the cardinal. "I shall inform myself concerning him without fail." And, inquiring his name and surname, he made a note of them in his memorandum-book. He added that he planned to be in their village within a few days; that then Lucia might venture thither without fear; and that, meanwhile, he would think to provide some asylum for her until her difficulties could be better adjusted.

He then turned to the master and the mistress of the house, who came forward without more delay. He renewed the thanks which had already been conveyed by the pastor, and asked whether they would be willing to harbor for these few days the guests whom Heaven had sent.

"Oh! yes, your lordship," replied the matron, but with a tone of voice and an expression of countenance that signified much more than this curt response, muffled as it was besides by embarrassment. But her spouse, thrown into an orgasm by the presence of such an interlocutor and by the desire of doing himself honor

upon an occasion of so great consequence, cast about eagerly for some fine reply. He contracted his brow, rolled his eyes about in their sockets, pursed up his lips, stretched the bow of his intellect to its utmost capacity, and ransacked every cranny of his brain for some sententious way of assenting. A parturient welter of ideas and fragmentary phrases surged up within him. But time pressed, and the cardinal was already giving signs of taking his silence for agreement. The poor man finally got his mouth open, and blurted out: "You bet!" and there his eloquence stopped—a circumstance which not only left him humiliated at the moment, but the remembrance of which always obtruded itself to spoil his satisfaction at the honor thus conferred upon him. How often in retrospect, as he reproduced the scene in his imagination, did not expressions occur to him, almost it would seem out of spite, which would have served his purpose better than that insipid "You bet!" But, as an old proverb says, the water that is passed grindeth no corn.

The cardinal withdrew, invoking Heaven's blessing upon the house.

That evening he inquired of the pastor how he could make some suitable recompense to the tailor, who could not be rich, for his expensive hospitality—especially at this particular time. The priest replied that, in point of fact, neither the emoluments of his trade nor the rents he received from a few fields which he held in fee simple, would have enabled the good man to practice liberality towards outsiders during such a season; but that, having laid something aside in past years, he was now one of the most substantial men in the neighborhood and could make even greater outlays without hardship, as he certainly made the present with real cheerfulness; that, besides, there would be no way of making him accept compensation.

"Belike he will have accounts with his customers," suggested the cardinal, "which they cannot pay."

"Your lordship can easily decide. These poor folk pay their debts from their surplus crops. Last year there was no surplusage, and this year it will fall short of the need."

"Very well," replied Federigo. "I assume all those debts. Do

you have the goodness to get a statement of the accounts, and pay them off."

" 'Twill be a fairish large sum."

"So much the better. And then, there will be no lack of those still more needy, who are not debtors only because they can find no creditors."

"Alas! no lack indeed. We do what we can, but how is one to meet the needs of all in such times as these?"

"Let him clothe all such at my expense, and pay him well. In sooth, whatever goes not for bread this year seemeth stolen; but this is a special case."

The story of this day must not be closed without relating briefly how it ended for the Un-named.

This time the news of his conversion had preceded him into the valley. It had circulated rapidly, leaving an aftermath of dismay and anxiety, of angry feelings and wagging tongues. To the first bravos, or servants (it's all one), whom he met, he made a sign that they should follow, and so on at intervals to others. They all trudged along behind with an unwonted sensation of suspense but with undiminished deference, until, attended by an ever-increasing train, he reached the castle. He beckoned to those at the gate to follow with the others. He entered the outer court, and, advancing to the centre without dismounting, hallooed vociferously. It was the accustomed signal, at which all within hearing were accustomed to assemble. In a trice all who had been scattered here and there throughout the building ran to the summons and joined the foregathering of their fellows, each bending his eye on the master.

"Repair ye to the great hall and attend my coming," he said, and sat watching them retire. He then dismounted, led his beast to its stall unassisted, and went to keep his appointment. At his appearance the buzz of whispering died away instantly. All withdrew to one side, leaving a large space of the chamber open for him. There may have been thirty present.

The Un-named raised his hand, as though to maintain this sudden silence. He elevated his head, which towered over those of his myrmidons, and began: "Hark ye all, and let none speak

unless he be bidden. Sons! the road we have trod till now leadeth to the lowest pit of hell. I say not so to reprimand you, I who have outstripped you all and overtopped you in malice; but hear what I have to say. God in His mercy hath called me to amend my life. I shall amend it—I have amended it. May He do the same by you! Know ye, therefore, and be well assured that I had rather die than do aught against His holy law again. I countermand all the iniquitious commissions which you hold from me at present. You understand my words. Nay, more; I command you to proceed no further with those enterprises. And be likewise assured that none of you, from this hour forward, can work any ill with my countenance or in my employment. Those who wish to remain on these terms shall be to me as my own flesh and blood; and the setting sun would find me a well-contented man at the close of that day when I should not have broken my fast because of giving my last loaf to the very last man of you. Those who are unwilling shall receive their hire and a gratuity besides. They may depart. But let them not set foot here again, unless it be to reform their life, in which event they shall always be received with open arms. Think well on it tonight. Tomorrow I shall call you one by one to learn your decision, and then I shall issue new commands. For the present, each withdraw to his own post. And may God, Who hath used me so mercifully, direct your thoughts aright."

He ceased, and all was silence. Various and tumultuous as were the thoughts that seethed in those rude brains, no outward sign escaped them. They were accustomed to bowing to their master's voice as the manifesto of a will from which there was no appeal; and that voice now, in announcing that the will was altered, gave not the slightest indication that it was enfeebled. It never entered one of their heads that, the master being converted, they might undertake to browbeat him or answer him as they would another. They saw in him a saint, but one of those saints whom artists paint with head erect and sword in hand. Besides their fear, they felt towards him (especially such as had been born on the land, and they constituted a large proportion) the affection of vassals towards their liege. From

all alike he elicited the homage of hero-worship, and none approached his person without feeling a kind of awe, which even the most uncouth and arrogant natures experience in the presence of superiority that they have once recognized.

Again, the things they had just heard from his lips, while they were odious to their ears, were neither untrue nor altogether alien to their intellects; and if, in the past, they had made them the subject of a thousand jests, it was not at all from incredulity, but to forestall by their raillery the fear which would have seized them had they taken to reflecting seriously. And now, seeing the effect of this fear upon a nature such as their master's, there was not one of them who was not infected by it in a greater or less degree, at least temporarily. Finally, those of their number who, being abroad that morning, had been the first to learn the great tidings, had also witnessed and reported back the delirious joy of the surrounding population and the love and veneration which had superseded the former hatred and fear of the Un-named. Thus it came about that, in the man whom they had always looked up to as a being of a different order, they now saw the cynosure and idol of the multitude—still on an eminence above the rest of men, though in so different a sense—still out of the common ruck—still a chief.

So they stood thunderstruck, each uncertain of the other and of himself. Some gnashed their teeth in vexation and some cast about mentally for a place in which to seek an asylum and employment; some examined themselves to see whether they could live decently; some more, touched by the words to which they had listened, even felt an inclination in that direction; while still others, without coming to any decision, resolved to promise all that would be required in any event and to stay on meanwhile and eat the bread so generously proffered and withal so hard to come by in the present circumstances, and so gain time. No one breathed a syllable in reply. And when the Un-named, at the end of his allocution, again authoritatively raised his hand to indicate that they were dismissed, they all slunk silently away together like a flock of sheep. He himself followed in their wake, and, halting in the middle of the courtyard, he stood in the

twilight watching them separate and bend their steps each to his own particular post. He then went upstairs for a lantern and again made the rounds of the courtyards, the corridors and halls, visited every entrance, and, seeing that all was quiet, retired to sleep. Yes, to sleep; for he was in truth sleepy.

Of complicated and at the same time pressing affairs of business, eagerly as he had been wont to take them upon himself, never before had he accumulated such a budget as in the present juncture; still he was sleepy. The remorse which had robbed him of slumber the night before was not only not silenced, but shriller, more pitiless, more inexorable than ever; still he was sleepy. The order—the species of government—which, after so many years, he had set up within these precincts at the cost of so much care and such a rare combination of audacity and perseverance, had now been jeopardized by a few words; the unbounded compliance of his dependents, their readiness for all employments, their gang-spirit of loyalty, upon which he had been wont to repose confidence, had now been shaken by his own act; what had been his resources he had now changed into a mountain of embarrassment; confusion and uncertainty had been admitted within his gates: still he was sleepy.

So he went to his chamber, and, approaching the bed which the night before had been strewn with thorns, he knelt down beside it with a mind to pray. He did, in fact, find in a deep and sequestered cranny of his mind the prayers he had been taught to say in childhood. He began to recite them now, and those words, so long furled up in his memory, came tumbling over one another to get out. An indefinable complex of sensations followed: a certain tenderness proper to this natural reversion to habits of innocence; a certain aggravation of anguish at the thought of the abyss that yawned between that period of his life and this; impatience to attain by works of expiation to a renewed conscience, to a state that was now his nearest approach to innocence; gratitude to God; confidence in that mercy which could lead him to such a consummation and which had already given him so many tokens of meaning to do so. Rising from his knees, he then went to bed, and was asleep forthwith.

Thus ended this day, so celebrated even at the epoch when our anonymous author was writing. And now, were it not for him, we would know nothing about it, at least in detail; because Ripamonti and Rivola, cited above, say no more than that this notorious tyrant, after a conference with Federigo, changed his life marvelously and for all time. And how many have ever read the books of these two writers? Still fewer than those who will read our own. And who can tell whether, in the valley of the Un-named itself, did one have the desire and the good fortune to discover it, some feeble and confused tradition of the events still survives? So many things have happened in the meantime!

Chapter XXV

The following day nothing else was talked of in Lucia's native hamlet and in all the country round about Lecco but herself, the Un-named, the archbishop and a certain other gentleman who, much as he delighted in having his name on people's lips, would willingly have foregone the attention he excited in the present juncture—we mean His Lordship, Don Rodrigo.

Not by any means that his doings had not been talked of before, but the comment had been fragmentary and surreptitious. It needed that two persons be very well acquainted, indeed, to open upon such a topic. And even then they did not inject into their conversation all the feeling of which they would have been capable, because men in general are so constituted that, when their indignation can be vented only at a great risk, they not only evince less or altogether repress that which they feel, but even feel less in reality. But now who was to restrain himself from seeking information and passing judgment upon so notorious an event, in which the hand of God had been made visible and two such personages had figured so admirably? one of them, in whom an intrepid love of justice went hand in hand with an exalted authority; the other, in whom lawlessness seemed so signally humiliated in person that brigandage in general appeared to capitulate and seek a truce.

In such company Don Rodrigo shrank to comparative insignificance. Now at last all realized the heinousness of molesting innocence in order to wreak its dishonor, of carrying on a persecution with such shameless persistence, such atrocious violence, such abominable treachery. His numerous other exploits were rehearsed on this occasion, and folk now said what they felt, each one being emboldened at finding himself in accord with every one else. Whisperings and mutterings were general—indulged in at a safe distance, however, by reason of all the bravos that the execrated noble kept about him.

A good part of this public odium fell to the share of his friends and courtiers. They gave a good grilling to the right-worshipful podestà, always deaf, dumb and blind to the actions of the tyrant, but at a safe distance, too, because he also had his bailiffs, if not his bravos. With Doctor Azzeccà-Garbugli, who could only prate and scheme, and with other hangers-on of the same class they did not observe the same circumspection. Fingers were pointed at them and black looks met their eyes, to such an extent that for the time being they deemed it wise not to appear on the street.

Don Rodrigo, thunderstruck by this unforeseen piece of news, so different from the announcement he was expecting from day to day, nay, from one moment to the next, remained shut up alone with his bravos in the castle, chafing for two whole days. On the third he left for Milan. Had there been nothing more than the grumbling of the people to reckon with, he would perhaps (since matters had gone so far) have stayed precisely to meet it, nay, to seek an occasion, by making an example of the hardiest, of teaching a lesson to all. But what drove him off was the knowing for sure that the cardinal was coming to the vicinity. His uncle, the count, who of this whole story knew only so much as Attilio had told him, would certainly insist that on such an occasion Don Rodrigo should play a prominent rôle and publicly receive the cardinal's most distinguished attentions.

He would have insisted, and would, moreover, have demanded a circumstantial account of the proceedings, because it was an important opportunity of showing the esteem in which their family was held by an authority of the first order. Now, every one perceives how well situated Don Rodrigo was to play such a part. To escape entirely from so annoying a dilemma, he arose one morning before sunrise and posted off in his carriage with Griso and the rest of the bravos riding before and after, and, leaving orders for the rest of his household to follow later on, he departed like a fugitive—like (if we may be permitted to dignify our characters by illustrious comparisons)—like Catiline departing from Rome, breathing forth threats and swearing to return swiftly in different guise to wreak his vengeance.

Meanwhile the cardinal was on his way, visiting, one each day, the different parishes about Lecco. On the day on which he was due to arrive in Lucia's hamlet a great part of the population was already on the way to meet him. At the entrance to the village, just outside Agnese's cottage, there was a triumphal arch, constructed with saplings for uprights and poles for transverses, the whole being thatched over with moss and straw and trimmed with the green boughs of ilex and holly, vivid with flaming red berries. The façade of the church was hung with tapestry. From every window-sill was suspended an expanse of sheets and coverlets, infants' swathing-clothes arranged like bunting—all those little necessaries that, rightly or wrongly, could make a pretence of superfluity.

About four o'clock, which was the hour at which the cardinal was expected, those who had remained at home—women, old men and children for the most part—also set out to meet him in what resembled a procession at one moment and a rout at the next, with Don Abbondio at their head—glum amid all the festivity, both on account of the noise, which dismayed him, and the scurrying back and forth, which, as he incessantly remarked, made his head whirl, and then also on account of his secret fretting lest the women should have babbled and it should fall to him to render an account of the marriage.

All at once they saw the cardinal appear—or, rather, the press of people enveloping him in his litter, with his suite about him; because nothing of all this was visible except the single portent, hovering in the air above the heads of the multitude, of a part of the cross borne by the chaplain riding along on his mule. The group about Don Abbondio now hurried forward pell-mell to join the others, and he, after three or four remonstrances and admonitions to go slowly and keep in line, turned back in great dudgeon, and, grumbling "A Babel, a very Babel" as he went, entered the deserted church alone and remained there awaiting his guest.

The cardinal was pursuing his way meanwhile, scattering benisons with his hand and receiving them in turn from the lips of the multitude, whom his suite had much ado to keep even at

arms' length. Being fellow-citizens of Lucia, they would fain have made some extraordinary demonstration in honor of the archbishop, but the thing was not easy, because, wherever he went, it was customary for all to do their utmost. Even at the beginning of his pontificate, as he was making his solemn entry into the cathedral, the crush was so great that his life was feared for, and some gentlemen next him had unsheathed their swords to frighten off the crowd. To such a degree were the manners of the period infected with unruliness and violence that, even in making demonstrations of good-will to a bishop in church and in controlling them, they had to come close to murder. And even this method of defence would probably have been unavailing, had not the master of ceremonies and his assistant, two upstanding and intrepid young priests named Clerici and Picozzi, hoisted the prelate on their shoulders and carried him bodily from the door to the high altar. From that time on, his first entrance into the many churches he had to visit on his episcopal rounds may without joking be counted among his pastoral hardships, and sometimes among the dangers to which he was exposed.

So in this instance he entered as best he might. He proceeded to the altar, and, after remaining for a while in prayer, he then, according to his custom, addressed a short talk to the people upon his love of them, his desire for their salvation, and how they were to dispose themselves for the morrow's functions. Afterwards, having retired to the parochial residence, he asked in the course of conversation for information concerning Renzo. Don Abbondio told him that he was somewhat quick, a little hot-headed, of a choleric disposition. But, to more detailed and precise questions, he was fain to answer that he was a law-abiding youth and that he could not understand, any more than another, how he had committed all the rascalities they said he had perpetrated in Milan.

"And as to the young woman," resumed the cardinal, "is your reverence also of opinion that she can come now with safety and dwell at home?"

"For the nonce," replied Don Abbondio, "she can come and

stay as she lists. For the nonce, I say. But," he subjoined with a sigh, " 'twould need that your illustrious lordship were always here, or at least near by."

"The Lord is always nigh," quoth the cardinal. "For the rest, I shall think of placing her in safety." And he gave orders that early the following day his litter should be sent with an escort for the mother and daughter.

Don Abbondio went out well content that the cardinal had spoken to him concerning the pair without calling him to an account for refusing to marry them. "So he knoweth naught," he soliloquized. "Agnese hath held her tongue—for a wonder. True, they must meet again; but we shall give her another drilling, another drilling." And he knew not, poor man, that Federigo had not broached the topic precisely because he intended to speak to him of it at length when there would be more leisure. And, before giving him his deserts, he wished also to hear his reasons.

But the prelate's preoccupation about placing Lucia in safety had become superfluous. Since we took leave of her, things have happened which we must relate.

The two women, during the few days they had to spend in the tailor's hospitable cottage, had resumed, each as far as she might, their old mode of life. Lucia had at once asked for employment, and, as at the convent, she sewed and sewed and sewed in a small chamber withdrawn from the eyes of the populace. Agnese went out a little, and worked a little in the company of her daughter. Their conversation was sadder in the same proportion that it was more affectionate than usual. Both were prepared for a separation, because the lamb could not return to dwell so near the lair of the wolf; and when and what would be the term of that separation? The future was dark and perplexing—for one of them above all. Agnese went on embellishing it, meanwhile, with her wonted cheerful speculations: Renzo would at length shortly send news of himself, if nothing untoward had befallen him; if he had found employment and a home, and if (and why question it?) he still held to his plighted troth, wherefore not go and live with him?

And on such hopes she expatiated and expatiated over again

before the daughter, for whom it is hard to say which was the greater, the pain of listening or the difficulty of replying. Her great secret was still locked in her breast, and, disturbed though she was by her repugnance at dissimulating now for the second time to so good a mother, yet restrained, invincibly as it were, by the diffidence and various fears which we have already noted, she went on from day to day saying just nothing at all. Her plans were widely different from the mother's, or, to be more correct, she had no plans—she abandoned herself to Providence. She sought, therefore, to let the conversation drop or to avert it entirely. Or she would say in general terms that she had no hope nor desire in this world beyond being reunited with her mother at the earliest possible instant. Oftenest tears came opportunely to drown her words.

"Do you know why it seemeth so to you?" Agnese would say. "'Tis because you have suffered so, and now it seemeth unreal that better days should betide. But leave all to the Lord; and if—let but a ray of hope—yes! just one ray—appear, and then you can say whether there is nothing your heart is set on." Lucia would kiss her mother and weep.

We might add that a great friendship had quickly sprung up between them and their hosts; and where should it spring up, if not between benefactors and benefited when both are unspoiled? Agnese particularly gossiped much with the goodwife. And then the tailor diverted them with stories and moral disquisitions. At the table, above all, he always had some rare matters to relate about Bovo d'Antona or the Fathers of the Desert.

Not far away from this village stood the country-seat of a couple of much consequence, Don Ferrante and Donna Prassede (the family name, as usual, is left in the ink-well of our anonymous author). Donna Prassede was an ancient gentlewoman with a strong propensity for doing good; certainly the worthiest trade that man can ply, but, like all the others, not immune from abuses. To do good, one must know what it is, and, like everything else, we can know it only through the medium of our own judgment, colored by our own peculiar passions and with the limitations of our own set of ideas, which often are nothing

to boast about. With her ideas Donna Prassede regulated herself as they say one should with one's friends: she had few, but to those few she was strongly attached. Among these few some were unfortunately erroneous, and these were not the least dearly cherished.

It happened, therefore, that she at times proposed to herself as good what was not so in reality, or chose for means what might bring about the opposite to what she intended, or construed as licit what was not licit at all, under a vague impression that one who does more than the law requires can also do more than the law permits. It likewise happened that she would fail to see in a case the thing that was, or would see in it the thing that was not; and many similar mistakes, which can happen to all, and do happen to all, not excepting the very best of us. Only with Donna Prassede they happened too often, and not unfrequently all at the same time.

Upon hearing of Lucia's great adventures and of all that was said concerning her on this occasion, she was smitten with curiosity to see the subject of the romance and sent her coach and footman to fetch both mother and daughter. The latter shrugged her shoulders and besought the tailor, who had acted as go-between, to find some plea for excusing her. Now, as long as it was question of turning away everyday folk who sought acquaintance with the maid of the miracle, the tailor had cheerfully done her bidding, but in this case refusal seemed to him a species of high treason. He protested with so many grimaces and exclamations and adduced so many arguments—that this was not the way to act, that it was a great family that sued, that one does not say "No" to gentles, that she might be the making of their fortune, and that, besides all the rest, Donna Prassede was a saint—was so insistent, in fine, that Lucia was fain to yield; the more so as Agnese supported every argument with her vote of approval.

Being come into the presence of her ladyship, the latter greeted them profusely and congratulated them at length. She asked questions, she gave advice—all with a certain innate superiority of manner, but counteracted by so many expressions of humility,

tempered by such generous solicitude and flavored by so great spirituality, that Agnese almost immediately, and Lucia soon after, began to feel relieved of that oppressive reverence which the presence of nobility had inspired in them. Nay, they found a certain attraction in her company. The end of it was (to make a long story short) that Donna Prassede, hearing that the cardinal had pledged himself to find an asylum for Lucia and pricked on by the desire of seconding, and at the same time of anticipating, this benevolent intention, herself offered to receive the maid into her household, where, without being bound to any particular service, she could at her own good pleasure assist the other women with their different tasks. She would undertake, she added, to apprise his lordship of the arrangement.

Besides the obvious and immediate good inherent in such a deed, Donna Prassede saw and proposed to herself another, which perhaps outweighed the first in her estimation, namely, the reclamation of waywardness and the directing aright of one who stood in sore need of it. Because, even from the first mention she had heard of Lucia, she had forthwith convinced herself that a lass who could have become betrothed to a ne'er-do-well, a malcontent, a scapegallows, must have some secret failing or peccadillo of her own. Tell me what company you keep, and I'll tell you what you are. Lucia's visit had confirmed her in this conviction. Not that, at bottom, she did not strike her as a good young woman; but there were many reservations. That hanging of the head, with the chin boring into the base of her neck, that trick of not replying, or of replying only in monosyllables as if under compulsion, might denote modesty, but they certainly indicated much stubbornness; it required no great imagination to guess that that head held opinions of its own. And her momentary blushing, and her stifling of sighs. And then, a pair of eyes that liked Donna Prassede not at all.

She held it for certain, as though she had learned it on good authority, that all Lucia's misfortunes were a punishment from Heaven for her friendship for that ne'er-do-well, and a warning to detach herself entirely from such associations, and, the case being so, she proposed to co-operate towards so virtuous an end.

Because, as she frequently told others and herself, her whole study was to second the designs of Heaven. Only she frequently made a gross blunder—that, namely, of identifying Heaven with her own brain. However, of this second intention which we have mentioned, she took good care not to betray any evidence. It was one of her maxims that, to succeed in doing good to folk, the first condition in the majority of cases is not to take them into one's confidence.

Mother and daughter looked each other in the face. In the painful necessity in which they were of separating, this offer seemed acceptable to both, because, if for no other reason, this country-house was so close to their hamlet; thanks to which, in the worst event that might betide, they would be brought close together and could see each other the next summer. Reading assent in each other's eyes, they both turned to Donna Prassede with the thankfulness that means acceptance. The latter renewed her caresses and assurances and promised to send without delay a letter to his lordship.

Upon their departure she had the letter composed by Don Ferrante, whom she used as her secretary upon important occasions on account of his being of a literary turn—of which more anon. The communication being of such importance, Don Ferrante brought all his cleverness to the task, and, on handing over the rough draft to his consort to copy, he warmly recommended the science of orthography to her consideration, this being one of the many things of which he had made a study, and one of the few over which he claimed dominion in the house. Donna Prassede made her copy with the most painstaking care and despatched the letter off to the tailor's. This was two or three days before the cardinal sent his litter to bring Lucia and her mother back to their native hamlet.

On arriving they got out at the parochial residence, where the cardinal was staying. An order had been left to admit them at once. The chaplain, who was the first to catch sight of them, acted as its executor, detaining them only so long as was necessary to give them in hugger-mugger a brief instruction upon the formalities to use in the presence of his lordship and the titles

by which to address him—a precaution he was wont to take as often as he could do so clandestinely. It was a continual torment for the poor man to see the little orderliness that was observed in this particular about the cardinal; "All," as he would say in talking with the other members of the household, "through the excessive kindness of this incorrigible saint, all through his democratic ways." And he would relate having with his own ears heard them reply to him more than once, "Yes, sir," "No, sir."

The cardinal was just then in conference with Don Abbondio upon the affairs of the parish, with the result that the latter was unable, as he would have wished, to give some instructions of his own to the two women. He was only able, in passing by them as he was coming out and they were going in, to dart a glance at them by way of indicating his satisfaction and intimating that they should continue, like good souls, to hold their peace.

After the first greetings on one side and the first curtsies on the other, Agnese drew forth the letter from her bosom and handed it to the cardinal, saying: " 'Tis from her ladyship, Donna Prassede, who says she knoweth your illustrious lordship's lordship very intimately; as it is only natural, among such great lords and ladies, all should know one another. When you have read, you shall see."

"Very good," said Federigo after reading the epistle and extracting the pith of the matter from Don Ferrante's flowers of speech. He knew of the family well enough to be assured that Lucia was invited from good motives and that she would be safe there from the treachery and violence of her persecutor. What estimate he held of Donna Prassede's head-piece we have no definite information. Probably she was not the person he would have chosen for such purposes, but as we have said, or intimated, elsewhere, it was not his custom to undo affairs that were not his own concern in order to do them better.

"Accept this separation and the uncertainty in which you are placed in peace of soul," he then subjoined. "Trust that it will soon come to an end, and that the Lord will be pleased to bring matters to that term towards which He seemeth to have shaped

them; but of this be sure, that what He willeth will be best for you." He then gave to Lucia in particular some further amiable counsel, some further encouragement to both, imparted his blessing and dismissed them. Hardly were they outside when they were beset by a waiting swarm of friends—the whole commune, one might say, who bore them home, as it were, in triumph. There was a contest among the women in multiplying congratulations, and a general exclamation of regret arose on hearing that Lucia was to leave on the morrow. The men vied with one another in proffering their services; every one wanted to stand guard that night at the door of their cottage. At which our anonymous author deems it meet to formulate a proverb: Wouldst thou have friends in need? Endeavor not to need them.

So much welcoming confused and bewildered Lucia; Agnese was not flustered so readily. But even to Lucia it proved at bottom a source of benefit by distracting her from the thoughts and memories that assailed her but too keenly even amid all the hurly-burly at the doorstep, in the friendly rooms, at the sight of every familiar object.

At the stroke of the bell announcing the approaching function all set off towards the church. This proved another triumphal progress for our two friends.

The services being over, Don Abbondio, who had hurried off to see if Perpetua had made all preparations for the meal, was summoned by the cardinal. He presented himself at once before his great guest, who, permitting him to draw close to his person, "Your reverence," he began—and one perceived, from the way in which the words were uttered, that they were the beginning of a long and serious discourse—"your reverence, why did you not unite this poor Lucia in marriage with her affianced lover?"

"They let the cat out of the bag this morning," thought Don Abbondio, and replied, stammering: "Your illustrious lordship will have heard of all the snarls which arose in that affair. Such confusion there was that even today one cannot see clearly; as your illustrious lordship may conclude from this, that the maiden is here after so many vicissitudes as if by a miracle, while the youth, after still other vicissitudes, is no one knoweth where."

"I ask you," resumed the cardinal, "whether it is true that, before all these developments, you refused to celebrate the marriage, after being requested to do so, on the day appointed; and why?"

"In sooth—did your illustrious lordship but know—what injunctions—what frightful threats against speaking I have received—" And he remained, without finishing the sentence, in an attitude that respectfully intimated it would be an indiscretion to wish to know more of the case.

"But," pursued the cardinal, his voice and demeanor grave beyond the ordinary, "it is your bishop who, in pursuance of his duty and your own vindication, wisheth to know from you why you have not done what in the regular course of things you should have done."

"Your lordship," said Don Abbondio, shrinking into himself, "I have been loath to speak. But I deemed it bootless, the circumstances being involved and long-standing and without remedy, to rake up the whole— Still, still I shall speak— I know that your illustrious lordship would not betray one of his priests. Because you perceive plainly that your illustrious lordship cannot be everywhere, and I remain here exposed— Still, if your lordship commands me, I shall tell—tell all."

"Proceed. I wish nothing better than to find you blameless."

Don Abbondio then began to tell the whole of his painful story, withholding, however, the principal name and substituting "a powerful nobleman," thus making whatever little concession to prudence he could in such tight straits.

"And you had no other reason?" demanded the cardinal, when Don Abbondio had finished.

"But perhaps I have not been sufficiently plain," replied he. "They commanded me under pain of death not to celebrate the marriage."

"And doth that appear to you a sufficient reason to neglect a clear duty?"

"I have always sought to do my duty, even at the cost of serious inconvenience; but when one's life is at stake——"

"And when you presented yourself before the Church," said

Federigo in graver accents still, "to take this ministry upon your shoulders, did she give you a guarantee of life? Did she say that the duties annexed to this ministry are free from obstacles and immune from danger? Did she tell you, forsooth, that your duty ended where danger began? Or did she not expressly tell you the contrary? Did she not give warning that she was sending you like a lamb among wolves? Knew you not that there were men of violence who would find that grievous which to you was a commandment? Did He, whose teaching and example we inherit, after whose likeness we call ourselves, and let men call us, shepherds, on coming to earth to exercise His office, exact that His life be secure? And to save that life, to preserve it, I say, a few days longer on earth, at the price of charity and our duty, was there need of holy anointings and the imposition of hands and the grace of the priesthood? The world was competent to impart such virtue and inculcate such doctrine. Nay, what do I say? Oh, shame! the world itself denies it. The world, too, makes its laws, which prescribe evil as a good; the world, too, has its gospel, a gospel of pride and hatred, and will not have it to be said that love of life is any reason for transgressing its precepts. It will not have it so, and it is obeyed. And we! we the children and the heralds of the promise! What would become of the Church, if your language were adopted by all your brethren? Where would she be, if she had appeared in the world with such doctrines on her lips?"

Don Abbondio stood hanging his head, his spirit faring in the gripe of such arguments like a chick in the clutches of a hawk, raised aloft into an unknown region and an atmosphere it had never breathed before. Seeing that some reply must be made, "Your illustrious lordship," he said, with a kind of forced submissiveness, "I shall have been in the wrong. If life doth not count, I have naught to say. But when one hath to deal with people of a certain class—people with might on their side and deaf to reasons—even did one chose to brave it out I see not what were to be gained. He is a noble with whom one cannot come off either victor or equal in the struggle."

"And know you not that to suffer for justice' sake is victory

for us? And if you know not this, what do you preach? of what are you the teacher? what the good tidings that you announce to the poor? Who asketh of you to overcome force with force? Certainly you will not be asked some day whether you have been able to administer a check to the powerful, because you have been given neither mission nor means for this. But it shall surely be asked whether you have used the means at hand to do what was prescribed, even if they had the rashness to forbid it."

"Even saints are queer," meanwhile ruminated Don Abbondio. "When 'tis boiled down, the gist of it all is that the love of two youngsters concerneth him more than the life of a poor priest." And he would have been well content, for his part, that the conversation rested there; but he perceived that at each pause the cardinal waited like one who expected an answer—a confession, an apology—something.

"I repeat, your lordship," he therefore replied, "that I will have been at fault— Courage cometh not with the wishing."

"And why, therefore, I might rejoin, have you pledged yourself to a ministry that engages you to wage war on the passions of the world? But why, I rather ask, do you not reflect, that, if courage is necessary to fulfil your obligations in this ministry, however you may have embraced it, there is One who will give it infallibly, if you but ask? Think you that those millions of martyrs came by their courage naturally? that they held life so cheap naturally? so many youths just beginning to savor it, so many old men accustomed to regret that it was near the close, so many damsels, so many wives, so many mothers? All had courage; because courage was needed, and they trusted in God. Knowing your weakness and your duties, have you thought to prepare for the difficult ordeals which might overtake you, and have overtaken you in this instance? Ah! if for so many years of pastoral ministration you have loved your flock (and how could you not love them?), if you have reposed in them your heart, your thought, your delight, courage should not fail you at need; love knoweth no fear. Now, if you loved them, those who are entrusted to your spiritual charge, those

whom you call your children; when you saw two of them menaced at the same time as yourself, ah! surely, as the weakness of the flesh made you tremble on your own account, so your charity will have made you tremble on theirs. You will have felt humiliated at that first fear, because it was a result of your misery; you will have implored the strength to overcome it, to banish it, for it was a temptation. But the noble and holy fear for others than yourself, for your children, *that* you will have heeded, *that* will have given you no rest, *that* will have incited and constrained you to take thought, to do whatever might be done to ward off the perils that threatened.—What hath your fear, your love, inspired in you? What have you done for them? What have you planned?"

And he became silent, like one awaiting a reply.

Chapter XXVI

At such a demand, Don Abbondio, though he had made shift to answer less precise questions indifferently well, stood like a stock without articulating a single word. And to say sooth, even we ourselves, with this manuscript before us and a pen in our hand, having nothing more to contend with than phrases and nothing further to fear than the animadversions of our readers —we ourselves, I say, feel a certain aversion to proceeding with the episode. We find something uncanny in the ease with which this man brings forward so many precepts of heroism and charity, of industrious solicitude for others and unlimited sacrifice of self. But reflecting that such things were said by one who carried them into action, we forge bravely ahead.

"You answer not?" resumed the cardinal. "Ah! had you, for your part, done what charity and duty dictated, no matter what turn affairs then took, you would not now be without a reply. Behold, therefore, for yourself, what you have done. You have obeyed unrighteousness, recking not of duty. You obeyed it dutifully. It appeared before you to intimate its wishes, but it wished to conceal itself from him who could have taken his precautions and put himself on his guard. It wished to make no noise, it wished for secrecy in which to mature at leisure its plans of treachery or of force. It commanded you to transgress and be silent; you transgressed and were silent. I now ask whether you have not done more; you will tell me if it be true that you sought out pretexts for your refusal, to disguise its motive." And he ceased speaking, again awaiting a reply.

"The tattlers have reported this, too," thought Don Abbondio, but gave no sign of having aught to say. Hence the cardinal resumed: "If it be true that you spoke what was false to those poor souls to keep them in ignorance and obscurity, where unrighteousness wished to have them—then must I believe it.

Then it only remains for me to blush for you, and for you, I hope, to weep with me. See whither you have been seduced by (kind Heaven! and you but now alleged it as an excuse!)—by regard for the life that perisheth. It hath led you—repel the charge freely, if it appear unjust, receive it with salutary confusion, if not—it hath led you to deceive the weak, to lie to your children."

"Behold how matters stand," meanwhile mused Don Abbondio. "Falling upon the neck of that archfiend"—referring to the Unnamed—"and raising such a pother with me for a half-lie told with the sole intent of preserving a whole skin. But they be superiors; they are ever in the right. 'Tis my destiny to have every one falling foul of me—even saints." Aloud he said: "I have done amiss. I perceive that I have done amiss. But what was I to do in a predicament of the sort?"

"Do you still inquire? Have I not told you already? And was there need to be told? To love, my son; to love and to pray. Then would your conscience have told you that unrighteousness may have threats to make and blows to bestow, but no commands; you would have united, according to God's ordinance, what man would have put asunder; you would have rendered afflicted innocence the service it had the right to demand of you. For the consequences God would have been your surety, because the way you trod was His; having chosen another, you are your own surety—and for what a train of consequences! But did all human resorts fail you, perchance? Was there, peradventure, no avenue of escape open, had you been willing to look about you, ponder and seek? Know now, then, that these poor creatures, had you married them, would have solved this difficulty themselves. They were disposed to fly from the face of the oppressor; they had planned their place of refuge. But even failing this, did it not occur to you that, after all, you had a superior, who could never have the authority thus to censure you for neglecting your office, did he not also have the duty of helping you fulfil it? Why did you not bethink yourself to inform your bishop of the obstacles which an impious tyranny was opposing to the exercise of your ministry?"

"The advice of Perpetua!" irritably reflected Don Abbondio,

whose most vivid impression during all this admonition was that of the bravos, and the thought that Don Rodrigo was still alive and whole, and some day or other would return again glorious, triumphant—and enraged. And, though the dignity confronting him, as well as this solemn demeanor and language, confused him and inspired a certain fear, still it was such a fear as did not overwhelm him nor prevent thoughts of recalcitrance; because it was alloyed with the reflection that, when all was said and done, the cardinal employed neither musket, sword nor bravos.

"Why," pursued the latter, "did you not bethink yourself that, were every other refuge barred to these poor innocent victims, I was there to receive them and place them in safety, did you but direct them to me,—direct two outcasts, that is, to their bishop as his own by right and a precious part, I say not of his charge, but of his inheritance? And as for yourself, I would have taken your disquietude on myself. I must needs forego sleep until I was sure that not a hair of your head was harmed. Did I lack either plans or places to safeguard your life? But think you that the man's daring would not have abated entirely when he learned that his plottings were bruited abroad, that they were known to me, and that I was on guard, resolved to use in your defence all the means in my power? Did you not know that, if man often promises more than he will perform, he also frequently threatens more than he dares attempt in the event? Did you not know that unrighteousness builds not only on its own strength, but also on the credulity and fear of others?"

"Perpetua's idea to a tittle," again thought Don Abbondio, without reflecting how little this accord between his servant and Federigo Borromeo about what could and should have been done, redounded to his own credit.

"But you," pursued the cardinal in conclusion, "did not see, nor wish to see, aught else than your own temporal danger. What wonder that it appeared so great that you sacrificed all else?"

" 'Tis all because my eyes were the ones that looked on those hideous visages, and my ears the ones that listened to their

words," blurted out Don Abbondio. "Your illustrious lordship talketh well, but 'twere need to stand in the shoes of a poor priest and find one's self put to the proof."

Hardly were the words uttered when he bit his tongue. He perceived that he had allowed his irritation to get the better of him, and muttered to himself: "Now for the hailstones." But, on timidly raising his glance, he was completely astounded to see the countenance of that man whom he could never succeed in fathoming pass from the gravity of reproof and authority to that of compunction and meditation.

"Too true!" replied Federigo. "Such is the misery of our fearful position. We must exact from others what God alone knoweth whether we ourselves would be ready to pay. We must judge, correct, reprove; and God knoweth what we ourselves would do in the same case, nay, what we have done in similar cases. But woe to me, should I take my own weakness as the measure of others' duties or as the standard of my teaching! For all that, it is true that, together with instruction, I am held to give good example, and not become like the doctor of the law, who laid upon others' backs loads which they could not carry and which he would not touch with one of his fingers. So, my son and brother, inasmuch as the errors of those in authority are often better known to others than to themselves, tell me frankly if you know where, through cowardice or human respect, I have failed in my duty. Confront me with my fault, that my confession may make up for the lack of good example. Reprimand me freely for my weakness; and then the words from my mouth will acquire more weight, because you will feel more keenly that they are not mine, but His, who can give both me and you the strength necessary to do as they prescribe."

"What holiness! but what a plague!" thought Don Abbondio. "He does not spare his own self; if only he may be prying and picking flaws, cross-questioning and fault-finding—even with himself!" Then, aloud: "Oh, your lordship, you jest. Who is there who doth not know the intrepid courage and dauntless zeal of your illustrious lordship?" And, in an undertone—"only too well."

"I asked not for encomiums, which make me tremble," said Federigo; "because God knoweth my shortcomings, and what little I know of them myself sufficeth to confound me. But I had wished, and do wish, that we might be confounded together before Him, that we might take hope together. I would wish, out of my love for you, that you comprehended how contrary hath been your conduct, how contrary your language, to the law which you still profess, and according to which you shall be judged."

"It always recoils on me," said Don Abbondio. "But did those tale-bearers tell you in turn that they invaded my house to ambush me and contract a marriage against the law?"

"They did, my son; but this grieveth my heart, this appalleth me, that you would still excuse your error; that you think of exculpation, nay, of recrimination; that you would substantiate your recrimination with what should be part of your confession. Who created for them, I do not say the necessity, but the temptation of doing as they did? Would they have sought these devious ways if the regular way had not been barred? Would they have thought of ambushing their pastor, if he had received them into his arms, helped them, counselled them? of taking him by surprise, had he not been in hiding? And you lay the blame on them? And you resent it, because they have, after so many calamities, nay, in the midst of calamity, vented their hearts to their pastor and yours? That the appeal of the oppressed and the plaint of the afflicted should be odious to the world is only what we should look for from the world, but that it should be so to us! And what advantage would it have been had they held their peace? Would it have been any gain had their cause gone directly to God for judgment? Is it not a new motive for loving them (and you already had so many), that they have given you this opportunity of hearing the authentic voice of your bishop, that they have afforded you the means of realizing better and cancelling in part the great debt you owe them? Ah! if they had provoked you, injured you, persecuted you, I would bid you (and would you need be bidden?) love them precisely for that reason. Love them now because they have suffered,

because they suffer still, because they are yours, because they are weak, because you have need of pardon; to obtain which, think how much their prayer will avail."

Don Abbondio remained silent, but it was no longer the sullen silence of before; he remained silent like one who has more matter for thought than for speech. The words to which he listened were unlooked-for deductions, novel applications, but the doctrine was long familiar to his mind and not disputed. The afflictions of others, from the consideration of which his apprehensions about himself had always distracted him, now produced a new impression on his mind. If he did not feel all the remorse which the exhortation was calculated to create (because those same apprehensions never ceased to be on the defensive), he felt some at least; and, together with it, a certain dissatisfaction with self, compassion for others, and a mixed sentiment of tenderness and confusion. It was, if the comparison may be allowed to pass, like the damp and crushed wick of a candle, which, on being presented to the flame of a great torch, at first smokes and spits and sputters but obdurately refuses to light; then, in the end, catches the flame and, well or ill, begins to burn. He would have accused himself outright and wept, had it not been for the thought of Don Rodrigo. As it was, he was so evidently moved, that the cardinal might perceive his words had not been without effect.

"Now," continued the latter, "with one of the twain a fugitive from home and the other on the eve of leaving it, with only too good reason for remaining away and too little likelihood of ever being reunited here, content if God will but reunite them elsewhere—now, alas! they have no further need of you, and you no opportunity of helping them; nor can our brief foresight discover any in the future. But who can tell whether God in His mercy is not preparing a way? Ah! let it not slip; seek it out; be on the alert; pray Him to create one."

"I will not fail, your lordship, I will not fail, upon my word," responded Don Abbondio, in a voice which now came from the heart.

"Ah! no, my son, fail not," exclaimed Federigo, and, with a

dignity pregnant with affection, concluded: "Heaven knoweth I would fain have held different converse with you. We both have our tale of years; and God knoweth I have been loath to afflict your hoariness with reprimands, when I had liefer spend my time with you in beguiling our common cares and troubles with talk of the blessed hope to which we are drawn so nigh. God grant that the words I have had to address to you may advantage us both! Bring it not to pass that I ever be called to an account for retaining you in an office where you have been found so unhappily wanting. Let us redeem the time; midnight is near; the Bridegroom cannot tarry; let us keep our lamps lighted. Let us offer to God our miserable hearts—empty, yes; but that He may be pleased to fill them with that charity that atoneth for the past and ensureth the future, that feareth and hopeth, weepeth and rejoiceth always in wisdom; that becometh, in each circumstance, the virtue of which we stand in need."

So saying, he started away, with Don Abbondio following after.

At this point our anonymous author apprises us that this was not the only interview between these two personages, nor Lucia the sole subject of their conversation; but that, not to digress too far from the story, he restricts himself to relating just this one. For the same reason he refrains from mentioning other noteworthy matters of record concerning this visitation of Federigo—his largesses, the discords he quelled, the inveterate feuds between individuals, families and entire neighborhoods which he either extinguished entirely or (as was the case all too frequently) lulled to rest, the desperados and petty tyrants whom he reclaimed permanently or for a certain time—consequences that ensued in greater or less measure wherever this worthy man tarried throughout the length and breadth of his diocese.

He next informs us that Donna Prassede arrived on the following morning, according to agreement, to take charge of Lucia and pay her respects to the cardinal, who praised the former and recommended her warmly to her protectress. Lucia tore herself away from her mother amid the sobs that the reader is left to imagine, and turned her back upon her cottage home, bidding a second good-bye to her native hamlet with that feeling of

double sadness which we experience in leaving the only dear spot we ever knew but shall know no more. But this was not her last farewell to her mother. Donna Prassede had said that she was to remain some days yet at her villa, which was not far off, and Agnese promised her daughter to come and visit her there and bid her a still sadder adieu.

The cardinal was also upon the spur to continue his visitation, when the pastor of the parish in which the Un-named's castle was situated arrived and asked for an audience. On being admitted, he presented a purse and a letter begging him to induce Lucia's mother to accept the hundred gold crowns in the purse as the maid's dowry, or for any other use which might appear to them better. He besought him at the same time to remind them that, if they ever thought he might be of service to them, in no matter what juncture, the daughter knew only too well where he was to be found, and for himself this would be the capstone of his good fortune. The cardinal at once summoned Agnese, who listened to him deliver his commission with no less astonishment than satisfaction. He presented the purse, which she accepted without overmuch demurring. "May God requite him," she said; "and let your illustrious lordship thank him kindly. But give no hint to any one else, because this village is queer—Asking your pardon, see you, for I well know your likes go not a-gossiping. But—your lordship understandeth me."

She then stole home, and, locking herself in her room, undid the roll. Though prepared for the spectacle, she could not but gaze spell-bound at so many broad-pieces fire-new from the mint, all in a little heap and all her own, of the like of which she had probably never seen more than one at a time before, and that but rarely. She told them over, and was then sorely put to it for a while in trying to stack them again and keep intact the column, so painfully arranged, by reason of its collapsing at every instant and slipping through her inexperienced fingers. Having at length remade the roll indifferently well, she wrapped it in rags and with twine bound it into a kind of bundle, which she then proceeded to tuck into a corner of the mattress. For

the remainder of the day she engaged in nothing but wool-gathering, building castles in the air and sighing for the morrow. On going to bed she remained for a while awake, thinking of her bed-fellows; slumbering, she saw them in her dreams. She arose at daybreak and set out at once for the country-seat where Lucia was established.

The latter, in her turn, though her great aversion to speaking of the vow continued unabated, had yet resolved to do violence to her inclinations and broach the subject to her mother during what was to be their last interview for a long, long time.

No sooner were they alone than Agnese, her face all aglow and her voice hushed, as though some one were present who must not hear what she was saying, "I have rare matters to tell you," she began. And she related their unexpected good fortune.

"Heaven bless him," said Lucia. "Thus you will have the wherewith to live in comfort and enough for an odd charity besides."

"What?" replied Agnese. "See you not all the things we can do with so much money? Hark! I have naught but you—you two, I might say; because, from the day Renzo began to woo, I have ever regarded him as a son. If so be that no mishap hath betided him, seeing that he hath sent no tidings. But pshaw! must everything go amiss? Nay, nay; God forbid! For myself, I would fain have left my bones in my own village; but now that you cannot bide there, thanks to that scoundrelly—And even to think of having him so close makes me abominate it; whereas with you twain I am at home everywhere. From the very first I was minded to accompany you, even though it had been to the ends of the earth, and that mind never changed. But, without money, what skilled all my readiness? Then, when poor Renzo's small hoardings are swept away by the besom of the law, after all his pinching and scraping, the Lord sendeth us riches in compensation. So, let him but find a loophole to let us know whether he be alive, and where his retreat, and what his intentions, and off I go after you to Milan. Yes, I'll hie me even to Milan. Time was when such a journey would have

given me pause, but misfortune maketh us matter-of-fact. I've fared as far as Monza already, and traveling is an open book to me now. I'll find some proper man to accompany me, some of my own kin, like Alessio of Maggianico; for, to say sooth, one would look in vain for the proper kind in our own village. Yea, I'll go along with him— You and I will be at all charges, of course—and— Do you hear?"

But, observing that Lucia, instead of brightening, only waxed sadder and sadder and evinced a tenderness that had naught of mirth in it, she brought up suddenly in her discoursing, and, "What is amiss?" she said, " 'Tis not to your liking?"

"Poor mamma!" exclaimed Lucia, throwing herself into her mother's arms and hiding her face in her bosom.

"Whatever is wrong?" again anxiously inquired her mother.

"I should have told you before," replied Lucia, raising her head and drying her tears, "but I had not the heart. Pity me."

"But loose your tongue; do you hear me?"

"I can no longer be poor Renzo's wife."

"What-t-t?"

Lucia, with bowed head, her breast heaving, and shedding silent tears, like one relating what, though unpleasant, is unalterable, bared the secret of her vow. Clasping her hands, she at the same time besought her mother's pardon anew for not having spoken sooner, entreated her not to breathe it to a living soul and begged her aid in fulfilling the promise.

Agnese was in consternation—thunderstruck. She would fain have resented the reticence used towards her, but the gravity of the disclosure stifled all personal displeasure. She would fain have chided, but it looked like challenging Heaven—the more so as Lucia took to painting over again a highly colored picture of her night in the castle, her black desolation and her unhoped-for rescue, separated by the interval in which she had made her promise, so unequivocal, so solemn. And Agnese, in the meantime, reflected on this, that and the other instance of strange and terrible visitations for violated vows which she had heard tell of more than once, nay, had herself told her daughter. After

remaining like one in a trance for an instant, "And what will you do now?" she said.

"Now," answered Lucia, " 'tis for the Lord to provide—the Lord and the Madonna. I have put myself in their hands. They have not forsaken me thus far; they will not forsake me now that—The sole favor I ask for myself, after the salvation of my soul, is that He will bring me back to you again; and He will grant it, yea! He will grant it to me. That awful day —penned up in that coach—oh! Mother of God!—with such men! Who could have prophesied that they were leading me to him who was to lead me back to you on the morrow?"

"But not to tell your mother of it out of hand!" quoth Agnese, her pique qualified both by tenderness and pity.

"Spare me. I had not the heart. And what would it have booted to distress you sooner?"

"And Renzo?" persisted Agnese, shaking her head.

"Ah!" exclaimed Lucia, starting, "I must not think on him more. 'Tis plain he was not destined for—See how the Lord seems to have been for keeping us asunder. And who can tell —but no! no! He will have preserved him from harm and will make him the happier without me."

"But meanwhile," resumed her mother, "had you not bound yourself for good and all, I had made a good clearance of the other obstacles with this money—if so be Renzo hath had no ill hap."

"But had that money ever reached us," replied Lucia, "but for that same night? The Lord hath willed it so; His will be done." And her words were drowned in weeping.

At such an unlooked-for argument, Agnese's mouth was stopped. After some interval Lucia, suppressing her sobs, resumed; "Now, that 'tis done, we must resign ourselves cheerfully. And you, poor mamma, can help me, first, by praying God for your sore-afflicted daughter, and then—poor Renzo must be told all. Devise how it shall be done. I beseech you —you who know how to devise. When you discover his whereabouts, have a letter written. Find you some man (your cousin Alessio comes pat to the purpose; besides that he is prudent and

charitable, he hath ever been friendly towards us and will not wag his tongue), have him write all just as it happened: the place I was in, what I suffered, how it was all the will of God, and for him to set his heart at peace, for that I can never belong to any man. And break it to him with a good grace; explain that it is a promise—that I have really made a vow. And when he knoweth I have promised the Madonna—he hath always been God-fearing. And do you have a letter written to me as soon as ever you receive news of him, and let me know that he is well, and then—never let me hear of him more."

Agnese, all tenderness, assured her daughter that everything would be done as she wished.

"There is something else I would fain say," resumed the latter. "If the unlucky lad had not had the misfortune to fix his thoughts on me, he had not met his present ill fortune. Now he is a vagrant on the earth. They have cut him off from his livelihood. They have stripped him of all his goods,—those savings he set aside for you know what purpose, the creature! And we with so much money! Oh! mamma; since the Lord hath blessed us so, and you say that Renzo is to you as your own—yea, own son, oh! halve your good fortune with him, since —God surely will not fail us. Seek a trustworthy medium, and send it him, for God knoweth how much he needeth it."

"Very well; bless your heart," replied Agnese. "It shall be done. I give you my honest word. Poor lad! Why think you the money gladdened me so? But——! I came hither so blithe-hearted. Enough; I shall send it. Poor Renzo! But neither will he—I know whereof I speak. True, money cheereth those who need it; but these be riches that will make him no fatter."

Lucia thanked her mother for this prompt and generous acquiescence with a depth of gratitude and affection which would have told an observer that her heart still clung to Renzo, more perhaps than she believed.

"And what will your poor mother do without you?" said Agnese, weeping now in turn.

"And what shall I do without you, poor mamma? in the house

of strangers, too? and beyond there in Milan—! But the Lord will be with us both, and will bring us together again. In eight or nine months we shall meet, and in that time He will have shaped events, I hope, for our reunion. Let us leave it all to Him. It is a favor I shall ever beg of the Madonna. Had I aught else to offer, I would make the oblation; but she is so good, she will grant it freely."

With these and similar words of lamentation and comfort oft renewed, with expressions of regret and resignation, with many recommendations and promises of secrecy, and tears and prolonged and repeated caresses, the two separated, promising each other that they would meet again in the coming autumn—as if the fulfilment depended on them; and still how like all of us under similar circumstances?

Meanwhile time passed, but Agnese could learn nothing about Renzo. Neither letter nor messenger brought any tidings and no one of all those she could consult, either from the village itself or the country around, knew any more than she.

Nor was she the only one who made fruitless inquiries. Cardinal Federigo, who had not told the distressed pair as a mere matter of form that he would seek information about the youth had, in fact, at once written for intelligence. Later on, upon returning to Milan after his visitation, he received a reply in which he was told that it had been impossible to discover the whereabouts of the person designated; that, true, he had lived for a while with a kinsman of his in such and such a town without inviting any gossip, but that he had disappeared suddenly one morning and this relative knew nothing of what had become of him, but could only repeat a number of vague and contradictory rumors which passed current: that the youth had enlisted for the Levant, that he had crossed over into Germany, that he had perished in fording a river. Meanwhile his correspondent would not fail to be on the alert for more definite information, if it ever transpired, and to convey it forthwith to his most reverend and illustrious lordship.

These and other rumors gradually traveled as far as Lecco, and consequently reached the ears of Agnese. The poor woman

did her utmost to verify them, to run down this, that and the other version, but she never succeeded in ascertaining more than "It is said," which even in our own day suffices to authenticate so many reports. Sometimes, hardly had one rumor been related, when some one appeared and told her it was all false, but only to give her in exchange another equally strange and sinister. So much for the gossip; behold the facts.

The Governor of Milan and Captain General of Italy, Don Gonzalo Fernandez de Cordova, had made a great to-do with the Venetian minister at Milan, because a malefactor, a highway robber, a promoter of pillage and murder, the notorious Lorenzo Tramaglino, who, being in the very hands of the law, had fomented a sedition to effect his escape, was received and harbored on Bergamask soil. The minister replied that the circumstances were new to him, but that he would write to Venice, in order to be able to furnish his excellency with whatever explanation the case might yield.

Now in Venice they held to the policy of seconding and encouraging Milanese silk operatives in their inclination to emigrate to Bergamask territory, and they, therefore, extended to them many inducements, and above all, that without which all others would be null—safety. Since, however, the small fry always profit by the litigation of the great, Bortolo was advised in confidence that that particular village did not agree with Renzo's health and that it would be better for him to enter some other factory, and also to change his name for the time being. Bortolo read between the lines and asked no questions, but hastened to report the matter to his cousin, whom he bundled into a calash and took away with him to another silk-mill, distant perhaps fifteen miles, and introduced him under the name of Antonio Rivolta to the proprietor. The latter was also a native of Milan and an old acquaintance of Bortolo's, and, though times were hard, did not demur about receiving a workman who was recommended to him as honest and skilful by one who was a good judge. In the event he found naught but cause for self-commendation in his acquisition; except only that, towards the beginning, he seemed to be somewhat absent-minded, because,

when he was called Antonio, the greater number of times he did not respond.

Soon after, there came from Venice an order, mildly couched, to the captain of Bergamo, directing him to seek and forward information as to whether there was to be found such a person in his jurisdiction, and specifically in such and such a village. The captain, having made the investigation in the sense in which he understood he was to make it, transmitted a reply in the negative, which was then transmitted to the minister at Milan, who transmitted it in turn to Don Gonzalo Fernandez de Cordova.

There wanted not inquisitive people, who wished to learn of Bortolo why the youth was no longer about and where he had gone. At the first putting of the question Bortolo would reply: "Why, he hath just disappeared." To satisfy the more insistent, without putting them upon suspecting the truth, he had deemed it well to regale them with now one, now another of the different rumors we have noted above; always alleging them as uncertain, however—things which he himself had got by hearsay without any definite authority.

But when inquiry was made at the instance of the cardinal, without divulging his name, with a certain display of importance and mystery, leaving it to be conjectured that it was in the name of some great personage, Bortolo was all the more suspicious and deemed it necessary to answer according to his wont; nay, a great personage being in question, he handed out straightway the whole bag of reports which he had forged one by one upon different occasions of need.

Let it not be thought, though, that Don Gonzalo, a nobleman of the first water, was pitting himself against a poor silk-spinner from the mountains; nor that, having heard, forsooth, of the scant respect and injurious words directed at the Moorish king hung in chains, he wished to pay him home; nor that he counted him so dangerous a character as to pursue him in his exile and prevent him from living even at a distance, like the Roman Senate with Hannibal. Don Gonzalo was beset with affairs too many and too important to worry over Renzo's doings; and, if

he appeared to worry over them, it arose from a singular combination of circumstances, thanks to which the luckless wight, without wishing it or, indeed, knowing it either then or later, was connected by an invisible thread of gossamer with these same affairs, so many and so important.

Chapter XXVII

We have already had occasion more than once to make reference to the war which was then raging for the succession of the states of Vincenzo Gonzalo, second duke of that name, but it has always been at a moment of great hurry, so that we could bestow upon it no more than a cursory mention. But now it becomes essential for the proper understanding of our narrative to have some more detailed knowledge of the facts. They are matters which the student of history should already know; but, since a just estimate of ourselves leads us perforce to presume that this work will be read only by the ignorant, it will not be amiss if we give a smattering of the situation to those who may need it.

We have already said that, at the death of Duke Vincenzo, Carlo Gonzalo, who stood first in the line of succession, being the head of a cadet branch of the family domiciled in France, where he possessed the Duchies of Nevers and Rhetel, entered upon the possession of Mantua, and (we now add, having in our hurry slurred it over before) of Montferrat. The court of Madrid, which wished at any cost (this, too, has been stated) to exclude the new prince from these two fiefs, and, in order to exclude him, had need of some reason (to wage war without assigning a reason would be unjust), had declared for the pretensions of another Gonzalo, Ferrante, Prince of Guastalla, to Mantua, and of Carlo Emmanuele I, Duke of Savoy, and Margherita Gonzalo, Dowager Duchess of Lorraine, to Montferrat.

Don Gonzalo, who belonged to the house of the Great Captain and bore his name, and who had already conducted a campaign in Flanders and was now exceedingly desirous of conducting another in Italy, was possibly the loudest advocate for war. While it was still under discussion, interpreting for himself the intentions and anticipating the commands of the before-men-

tioned court, he concluded a treaty of invasion and partition of Montferrat with the Duke of Savoy, and easily obtained its ratification from Duke Olivares, having convinced him of the feasibility of taking Casale, which was the best-defended point in the area assigned to the King of Spain. He protested in the name of the latter, however, that he wished to occupy the country only as a deposit pending the decision of the emperor, who, owing partly to the representations of others, partly to reasons of his own, had refused investiture to the new duke and enjoined him to leave the disputed states in sequestration until, after hearing both sides, he should restore them to the rightful claimant. This was a course to which Nevers would not submit.

He, too, possessed important friends: Cardinal Richelieu, the seigniory of Venice and the pope, who, as we have said, was Urban VIII. The first of these, engaged as he was at that time in the siege of La Rochelle and in a war with England and antagonized by the party of the Queen Mother, Maria de' Medici, who was for certain private reasons opposed to the house of Nevers, could only hold out promises. The Venetians would not make a move, nor even declare themselves, until a French army had descended upon Italy, and, while they surreptitiously aided the duke in every way they could, before the court of Madrid and the governor of Milan they took their stand upon remonstrances, proposals and exhortations, gentle or threatening, according to the moment. The pope recommended Nevers to friends, interceded for him with opponents, drew up plans of accommodation—of putting men in the field he would not even hear.

Thus the two partners in the offensive alliance were able to begin their proposed undertaking with the greater confidence. The Duke of Savoy, on his part, entered Montferrat. Don Gonzalo laid siege to Casale with the greatest alacrity, but (lest the reader might think that war is all roses) he did not find in his occupation all the satisfaction he had anticipated. The court did not assist him in the measure he desired, nay, left him destitute of the most necessary equipments. His ally, on the contrary, assisted him too generously; that is to say, after having

taken his own portion, he kept on nibbling at that assigned to the King of Spain. Don Gonzalo fumed savagely, but fearing that, if he made a sound, Carlo Emmanuele, as active in manœuvring and as supple in treaty-making as he was valiant in arms, would go over to the side of France, had to close an eye, digest his rage and keep mum. So the siege went ill, dragging on and sometimes retrograding, owing partly to the firm, determined and vigilant behavior of the besieged, and partly to his insufficient strength and (according to some historians) the many blunders of which he was guilty. As to this latter, we leave it an open question, being even inclined, in case it be really so, to find it admirable, if it resulted in fewer men being thus killed, maimed or crippled, or even, *ceteris paribus,* the roofs of Casale suffering less injury by the expedition. In such straits he received tidings of the uprising in Milan, and hastened thither in person.

In the report here submitted to him, mention was made of Renzo's rebellious and notorious escape and of the true and supposititious facts leading to his arrest. His informants were also able to state that the culprit had taken refuge in the territory of Bergamo. This circumstance arrested the attention of Don Gonzalo. He had received information from a quite different quarter that the Venetians had been emboldened by the uprising at Milan; that from the very first they had believed he would be forced to raise the siege of Casale and were counting upon his being dismayed and nonplussed—the more so that, on the heels of that occurrence, the news, so much longed for by them and so much dreaded by him, had arrived of the capitulation of La Rochelle.

Smarting with mortification, both as man and as diplomat, that those gentlemen should conceive such an opinion of his case, he was on the alert for every opportunity of convincing them by way of induction that he had lost none of his former confidence; because to have said outright, "I am not afraid," was the same as saying just nothing. A better expedient is to take umbrage, pick a quarrel, feign a grievance. Therefore, upon the Venetian minister's coming to pay his respects and at the same

time study his face and demeanor for symptoms of his inward feelings (note all well, for this is the fine old diplomacy of the past), Don Gonzalo, after making light of the late tumult and referring to it as though thorough remedies had already been applied, made the ado of which the reader knows about Renzo, as he also knows what ensued in consequence. After that he bestowed no further attention upon so trivial an occurrence. As far as he was concerned, it was finished business; and, when afterwards—and not so soon afterwards—he received the reply at his camp before Casale, whither he had returned and where he had something quite different to think about, he raised his head and looked about him, like a silk-worm searching for a leaf, paused an instant to try and recollect more vividly a circumstance of which his memory retained no more than a shadow, at last recalled the episode, remembered dimly and for the briefest instant the person, then passed on to other concerns and never thought of the incident again.

But Renzo, who, after the slight intimations that had reached him, must have been prepared for anything but this kindly oblivion, remained for a while without any other thought, or indeed, any other care than of concealment. The reader may well imagine that he was dying to send news of himself to Lucia and her mother and to hear from them; but there were two great difficulties in the way. One was that he would have been obliged to take into his confidence a secretary; because the poor lad could not write, nor even read in the broad sense of the word. If, on being questioned on this head, as it will be remembered, by Doctor Azzecca-Garbugli, he had replied in the affirmative, it was not by way of boasting—of gasconade, as we say. It was no more than the literal truth that he could read print, taking his own time to it; with script it was a horse of another color. He was, therefore, fain to share his concerns with a third party and, above all, the secret of which he was so jealous; and a man who could wield a pen and at the same time keep counsel was not to be so easily found at that day—more particularly in a village where he was without old acquaintanceships. The other difficulty was to get a courier—a man, first,

who was bound for those parts, then one who would undertake to carry his letter, and who, finally, would deliver it—again, all qualifications it was difficult to find combined in one person.

At length, after searching high and low, he found some one to do the writing. But, not knowing whether the two were still at Monza or elsewhere, he thought it best to enclose the letter in another to Father Cristoforo. The scribe also took it upon himself to have the letter delivered, and consigned it to a man who was to pass not far from Pescarenico. The latter left it, with many recommendations to the landlord, at an inn by the way situated at the most convenient point along his route, and, being addressed to the monastery, the packet arrived safely. What became of it subsequently was never learned. Renzo, after waiting in vain for a reply, had a second letter drawn up on about the same lines as the first, and enclosed it in another to some friend or relative of his at Lecco. Another bearer was sought and found, and this time the letter reached its destination. Agnese started off post-haste to Maggianico and had it read and explained to her by her cousin, the before-mentioned Alessio. Together they concocted an answer, which the latter reduced to writing, and which they later found the means of sending to Antonio Rivolta at the place of his domicile—not so swiftly, however, as we relate it all. Renzo received the reply and had it acknowledged. In short, the two sides kept up a correspondence, which was neither brisk nor regular, but yet, by fits and starts, continuous.

But, to have an idea of this correspondence, we should know something of the way such things then went—nay, go still; because I believe that in this particular there has been little or no change.

The peasant who cannot write and has need of doing so betakes himself to one skilled in the art, choosing him, as far as may be possible, from his own walk in life, because of the diffidence or the slight confidence with which he regards any other. He possesses him, with greater or less coherence and clearness, of the antecedent circumstances and sets forth what he wishes indited. The scholar partly understands, partly misunderstands,

makes certain suggestions, proposes certain changes and ends with a "Leave it to me." He takes up his pen and translates the thoughts of the other into literary form, correcting or improving, underlining some details and glossing over others, or omitting them altogether, according as seems best to fit the purpose; because those who know more than others are incorrigibly averse to being merely material instruments in their hands, and, when they are admitted into their neighbors' affairs, wish also to exercise a little dictation. For all that, the aforesaid scholar does not always succeed in saying all he would, and sometimes is betrayed into saying the exact contrary. (It even happens to us who write for the press.)

When the letter so composed comes to the hand of the correspondent, who is also uninitiated in the A-B-C, he takes it to another savant of the same calibre, who reads and interprets it to him. Disputes arise as to the way in which a given passage is to be understood; because the interested party, building upon his knowledge of previous facts, claims that certain words mean one thing, while the reader, standing upon his knowledge of composition, claims that they mean something else. At length illiteracy is fain to put itself in the hands of literacy and entrust the reply to the scrivener; which, being constructed on the model of the original communication, is liable to a similar interpretation. But if, moreover, the subject of the correspondence is somewhat delicate; if secrets are involved which the correspondent would be loath to have divulged to a third party, should the letter ever miscarry; if for this reason there is an express intention to be vague: then, however brief the correspondence, the parties to it end by understanding each other much as would formerly two scholastics after arguing for four hours anent entelechy—not to take an illustration from more live issues for fear of stirring up a hornet's nest.

Now, the case with our two correspondents was exactly what we have described. The first letter written at Renzo's direction treated of many matters. In addition to an account of his flight, much more succinct, but also much more jumbled than the one the reader has perused, he gave a report of his actual situation,

from which both Agnese and her interpreter were far indeed from gathering clear or complete sense. There were hints of a secret warning, of changing his name, of being safe, but under the necessity of hiding—all of which was unfamiliar enough to their comprehensions, besides being told rather cryptically in the epistle. Then there were anxious and passionate inquiries about Lucia's misadventures, with obscure and agonized references to the rumors which had traveled as far as Renzo. Finally, there were uncertain and distant hopes, plans grafted on the future, promises and adjurations to keep faith, not to lose patience or courage, and to bide better times.

After some interval Agnese found a safe means of forwarding the reply together with the fifty crowns settled upon him by Lucia. At seeing so much gold Renzo was at a loss what to think and, with a mind torn by astonishment and suspense that gave him no peace, he ran in search of his secretary to have him interpret the letter and furnish the key to so strange a mystery.

In her letter Agnese's amanuensis, after regretting the lack of clearness in his esteemed favor, went on to describe with about the same degree of clearness the fearful history of a certain person (so Lucia was designated); and here she accounted for the fifty crowns. She then came to the matter of the vow, but with much circumlocution, adding in language more direct and open the counsel about setting his heart at peace and thinking no more about her.

It wanted little but that Renzo came to fisticuffs with his interpreter. He trembled; he was horror-struck, infuriated with what he had comprehended, as well as with what he had failed to comprehend. For the third and fourth time he had the terrible scroll reread to him, now fancying he understood better, now finding that obscure which had at first seemed clear. In the frenzy of his various passions he insisted that the secretary take his pen in hand straightway and write a reply. After the strongest expressions that can be imagined of pity and terror for Lucia's misfortunes, "Write now," he dictated, "that I'll not set my heart at peace, now nor ever; that these be no proposals to make to

a youth like me; that I'll not touch the money, which I set aside and hold in trust for her dowry; that she must be mine; that I know naught of promises; that I have never heard tell of the Madonna intervening to do despite and tamper with promises, but only to succor those in tribulation and to gain favors; that this can never hold; that with this money we have the wherewith to begin housekeeping here; and that, though I'm in some perplexity now, 'tis only a squall that will soon blow over;" and more to the same effect.

Agnese received this letter in turn and answered it, and so the correspondence went on in the way we have said.

Lucia felt a great relief, when her mother succeeded, by what means I am unaware, in notifying her that the one she knew of was alive and unscathed and privy to her secret. She now desired nothing more, unless it were that he should forget her, or, to speak by the card, that he should think about forgetting her. On her side she resolved a hundred times in the day to do as much by him, and made use of every expedient to carry her resolution into effect. She worked assiduously and sought to absorb herself in her occupation, betaking herself to repeating her prayers or chanting hymns to herself whenever his image rose up before her. But oftenest this image, as if out of mischievousness, did not confront her thus openly. It stole gently into the background, so that her mind did not advert to its entrance until it had already been present for some minutes.

Her thoughts often dwelt with her mother (how could it have been otherwise?), and the ideal Renzo would glide softly into the group, as the actual Renzo had so often done in fact. Thus he always insinuated himself in no matter what company, what place, what memory of the past. And did the lorn maiden indulge at moments in day-dreaming about the future, there, too, he looked out at her, if only to say: "I shall not be here at all events." Still, if it was a hopeless undertaking to root him out of her thoughts entirely, Lucia did succeed up to a certain point in thinking about him less frequently and less vehemently than her heart would have wished; and she would have succeeded still further, had the wish been hers only. But there was Donna

Prassede, pledged to the limit of her powers to purge her mind of him utterly, and she found no better way of proceeding than to speak to her about him insistently.

"Well?" she would say. "Have we ceased thinking of him?"

"I think of no one at all," Lucia would answer.

But Donna Prassede was not to be paid off with such a reply. It craved not words but deeds, she would rejoin. And then she would harangue her at length about the habits of young women, "who," she would say, "when they have once set their heart on a runagate,—and that's the way the wind ever bloweth,—will never be weaned away from him. Let an honest, sensible match with a respectable, steady sort of man be frustrated through some accident; they make short moan. But let him be a roisterer, and the wound never heals." Thereat she would launch into a philippic against the absent lover, the scoundrel come a-throat-cutting and a-pillaging to Milan, and would have Lucia confess to the villainies he must have perpetrated in his own village.

Lucia, in a voice trembling with shame and pain and that degree of indignation which could find lodgment in one of her gentle nature and humble condition, protested and asseverated that in his native hamlet the poor fellow had never been in the public mouth except to be fairly bespoken, and that she only wished one of the villagers might be present to bear her out in her testimony. She even defended his conduct in Milan, of which she was not well informed, on the strength of the knowledge she had of him and his behavior since childhood. She defended him, or intended to defend him, out of pure charity, love of the truth and, to use the term with which she justified her sentiments to herself, "as her neighbor."

But Donna Prassede construed these apologies into fresh arguments with which to convict Lucia of being enamored of the lad. And to say sooth, we would be hard put to it to say how the case stood in such moments. The unworthy portrait which the older woman drew of poor Renzo conjured up in protest more vividly than ever in the girl's mind the picture limned by years of association; memories forcibly repressed welled up

in a flood; antipathy and contempt challenged so many motives for esteem; blind and violent hatred gave greater strength to pity: and, if no one can ever say how much such emotions are or are not tinged with that other emotion which generally follows in their train, we can fancy what happens in the minds of those from whom it is question or exorcising it altogether. Be that as it may, the conversation on Lucia's part was never protracted long, because her words were soon drowned in weeping.

Had Donna Prassede been driven to such cruelty by some inveterate hatred, perhaps those tears might have touched her heart and made her desist; but, being bent on benevolence, she pushed ruthlessly on—just as piteous wails and groans may stay the weapon of an enemy but not the lancet of a surgeon. Having discharged her duty well for the nonce, she passed from acerbity and reproaches to exhortation and advice, seasoned also with a little praise, so as to mingle the bitter with the sweet and accomplish her object more effectually by appealing to every impulse of the soul. Certain it is that these chidings (which always began, progressed and ended in much the same way) left no trace in Lucia's kindly bosom of real bitterness against her sharp-tongued monitress, who treated her with great kindness in all their other relations and whose good intentions were discernible even in this. But such interviews left an aftermath of turbulent thoughts and excited emotions, which were composed to their former indifferent calm only with much time and effort.

Well for her that she was not the sole object of Donna Prassede's benevolence, else these reproofs had been more frequent. Besides her other servants—all of them characters that needed reform and guidance, more or less; besides all the other occasions of rendering the same services out of her goodness of heart to others towards whom she had no obligation of any sort—occasions which she went to seek if they did not offer; she had five daughters, none of whom was at home, but who gave her all the more anxiety for that very reason. Three of them were nuns and two matrons. Donna Prassede accordingly found herself with three convents and two households to superintend—a vast and complicated undertaking, and all the more arduous in that two

husbands, backed by fathers, mothers and brothers, and three abbesses, flanked by other dignitaries and a host of nuns, were unwilling to accept her superintendence. Covert and urbane as was up to a certain point the manner of the ensuing war, or rather, of these five wars, they were none the less active and unrelenting. In every quarter there was the same unremitting alertness to elude her solicitude, to block the avenues to her suggestions, to evade her requests and to keep her, as far as possible, in the dark about their concerns. I pass by the difficulties and opposition she met with in the management of other affairs still more extraneous—'tis a known fact that benevolence is something that must be administered by force. Where she could exercise her zeal untrammelled was in her own home. There every one was the helpless thrall of her authority saving only Don Ferrante, who led a kind of existence all his own.

A man of study, he liked neither to command nor to obey. That in all domestic matters her ladyship should be supreme, well and good; but to be her servant, never! And if, at need and duly besought, he lent her the service of his pen, it was because it jumped with his humor. For that matter, he knew how to say "No" in this connection, too, when the thing to be indited did not command itself to his judgment. "Fend for thyself," he would then say. "If the matter appeareth so clear, do thou make shift." Donna Prassede, after having tried long and unavailingly to bring him around from this aloofness to compliance, had at last restricted herself to grumbling and designating him as a shirker, an obstinate pedant, a book-worm—the latter title dictated partly by pique, partly by complacency.

Don Ferrante passed long hours in his library, where he had a considerable collection of books, approaching, in fact, close to three hundred volumes—all select gear, being the most authoritative works on the different subjects, with each of which he was more or less conversant. In astrology he was rated, and rightly, as more than an amateur; because his knowledge of it embraced not only the generic conceptions and common terminology of influences, aspects and conjunctions, but enabled him to speak pertinently, and as it were, *ex cathedra,* of the twelve houses of

the heavens, of circles of position, of zones of light and of shadow, of ascendancy and descendancy, of transits and revolutions—of the most abstruse and best-ascertained principles, in fine, of the science. For perhaps twenty years he had sustained, in frequent and protracted controversies, the domification of Cardano against another savant who clung fiercely to that of Alcabitius—out of mere obstinacy, if we are to be believe Don Ferrante, who, while cheerfully recognizing the superiority of the ancients, could not abide that unwillingness to defer to the moderns, even when they are transparently right. He also knew the history of the science more than middlingly. He could quote at need the most celebrated predictions that had been fulfilled, and could reason subtly and learnedly about others that had miscarried, showing that the fault lay not with the science but with those who had not been able to apply it rightly.

Of ancient philosophy he had acquired a sufficiency, and went on daily acquiring more, through the reading of Diogenes Laertius. Since, however, one cannot adopt all systems of thought, no matter how attractive; and since, to be a philosopher, one must choose some author; so Don Ferrante had chosen Aristotle, who, as he used to say, was neither ancient nor modern, but unqualifiedly the philosopher. He also possessed the works of the wisest and subtlest followers of the master among the moderns. Those of his assailants he had always refused to read, not to squander his time as he said; and to buy, not to squander his money. By way of exception, though, he made room on his shelves for the celebrated twenty-two books *De Subtilitate* and sundry other anti-Peripatetic works of Cardano in deference to his merits as an astrologer; saying that one who could write the treatise *De Restitutione Temporum et Motuum Cœlestium* and the book *Duodecim Geniturarum,* deserved to be listened to, even when he erred; and that the man's great defect was his superabundant genius; and that no one can conceive the heights he would have reached, even in philosophy, had he always kept the right road. For the rest, consummate Aristotelian as he was esteemed by the learned, Don Ferrante was not satisfied with his own proficiency, and more than once

was heard to say with great modesty that essences, universals, the soul of the world and the nature of things, were matters not so clear as people might suppose.

Natural philosophy he cultivated rather as a recreation than as a serious study. Even Aristotle's and Pliny's works on the subject he had not so much pondered as read. Nevertheless, thanks to this reading and to notions gathered casually from treatises on general philosophy and from occasional excursions into the *Magia Naturale* of Porta, into Cardano's triple *History of Rocks, Animals and Plants,* Albertus Magnus's *Tractate on Herbs, Plants and Animals,* and other works of lesser repute, he could converse in season upon the most remarkable virtues and the most singular peculiarities of many simples; he could describe accurately the shape and habits of sirens and of the unique phenix; he could explain how the salamander remains in the fire without getting burnt; how the remora, a diminutive fish, possesses the strength and the ability to bring the greatest ship to a dead stop in mid-ocean; how dew-drops turn to pearls in the oyster's shell; how the chameleon lives on air; how ice, by ages of induration, forms crystal; and still others of nature's most wonderful secrets.

He had penetrated further into the mysteries of magic and witchcraft, these sciences being, says our anonymous author, more popular and necessary, and their data being more important and more easily verifiable. It goes without saying that his sole aim in such studies was to inform himself and to know exhaustively the sinister arts of sorcerers, to be able to guard against them and protect himself. Under the tutelege principally of the great Martino Delrio (the supreme authority on the science) he qualified himself to hold forth *ex professo* on amatory charms, sleeping charms, malefic charms and their innumerable subdivisions, which, as our anonymous author says, we see practiced daily with such lamentable results. Equally extensive and solid was Don Ferrante's acquaintance with history, especially universal history. Here his authors were Tarcagnota, Dolce, Bugatti, Campana, Guazzo, that is to say, the most esteemed in their department.

But what is history, Don Ferrante was wont to say repeatedly,

apart from political science? A guide who walks on and on with none following to learn the way, and who, consequently, wastes his steps; just as political science without history, is one who walks without a guide. One shelf of his library was, accordingly, assigned to the masters of statecraft; where, from among many of slight bulk and secondary fame, one singled out Bodino, Cavalcanti, Sansovino, Paruta and Boccalini. But there were two books which Don Ferrante placed ahead—very far ahead—of all others on the subject—two works which, up to a certain period, he had been accustomed to designate as the first, without ever being able to decide which of the two deserved the actual priority—one, *The Prince* and the *Discourses* of the celebrated Florentine secretary (a false knave, to be sure, he would observe, but a profound observer); the other the *Philosophy of the State* by the no less celebrated Giovanni Botero (an honest man, he would likewise observe, yet an astute thinker).

A short while before the epoch of our story, however, a book had appeared which settled the question of primacy, taking precedence even of the works of those two paladins, Don Ferrante would assert—the book which presents in sublimated form all knaveries, that they may be recognized, and all virtues, that they may be put into practice—a book of tiny proportions, but unalloyed gold—in one word the *Statista Regnante* of Don Valeriano Castiglione; that same thrice-renowned Castiglione of whom it may be said that the greatest writers vied with one another in exalting him, and that the highest dignitaries strove with one another for his possession; the same whom Urban VIII, as is well known, honored with magnificent encomiums; whom Cardinal Borghese and the Viceroy of Naples, Don Pietro di Toledo, importuned to write, the former the deeds of Pope Paul V, the latter the wars waged by His Catholic Majesty in Italy, both in vain; the same whom Louis XIII, at the instance of Cardinal Richelieu, appointed his historiographer; the same on whom Duke Carlo Emmanuele of Savoy conferred the same office; in praise of whom (to omit other glorious testimonies) Duchess Christina, daughter of His Most Christian Majesty, Henry IV, in a diploma which rehearses his many other titles to greatness,

witnessed anew to "the certainty of the fame which he possesses in Italy as the first writer of our time."

But if, in all the before-mentioned sciences, Don Ferrante could claim to be indoctrinated, there was one in which he both merited and enjoyed the title of past-master—the science of chivalry. Not only could he expatiate on it like a real adept, but, begged as he often was to intervene in affairs of honor, he never failed to render some decision. He had in his library, and it might be said, in his head, the works of the most esteemed writers on the subject: Paridi dal Pozzo, Fausto da Longiano, Urrea, Muzio, Romei, Albergato, and the *Forno Primo* and *Forno Secondo* of Torquato Tasso, the passages from whose *Gierusalemme Liberata* and *Gierusalemme Conquistata* bearing on chivalry he also had at his fingers' ends and could quote from memory. But the author of authors to his mind was our celebrated Francesco Birago, with whom he was associated more than once as judge in affairs of honor, and who, in his turn, spoke of Don Ferrante in terms of particular esteem. From the very first appearance of this renowned author's *Discorsi Cavallareschi,* Don Ferrante prophesied unhesitatingly that this work would render Olevano obsolete, and would go down to posterity, in company with its noble sisters, a codex of paramount authority—a prediction, observes our anonymous author, whose fulfilment every one can see for himself.

From this observation he passes on to polite letters. But we begin to doubt whether, in truth, the reader has any great eagerness to accompany him further in this inventory. Nay, we begin to fear that, in following him good-naturedly even thus far in matters extraneous to our main narrative and pursued so minutely, perhaps only to parade his knowledge and prove himself up to the times, we may have won the character of servile copyist for ourself and the reputation of downright bore as joint appanage of ourself and our honest chronicler. Leaving unchanged, however, what we have written, so that our labor shall not have been wasted, we shall pass over the remainder and take to the broad highway of our narrative—the more particularly since we must now travel a long stretch of road without meeting any of our

characters, and a still longer one before finding them at the stage which certainly is most interesting to the reader—if, indeed, he is interested in a single particular of the whole business.

Up to the autumn of the following year, 1629, they all continued, some perforce and some of their own choice, in virtually the same circumstances in which we have left them, without anything worthy of note happening to the latter or being accomplished by the former. The autumn in which Agnese and Lucia had calculated to meet arrived, but a great public event defeated their calculations; which was certainly one of its most trivial effects. Then followed other great events, without, however, materially altering our characters' fortunes. At length new disasters, more general, more grave and more extreme, came along and involved even them, even the lowliest of them (according to the world's scale of values) in the universal havoc—just as the mighty tornado that rushes over the land dismembering and uprooting trees, unroofing houses and belfries, toppling over walls and scattering fragments in all directions in its fury, also catches up the straws that lie hidden in the grass, searches out the dry leaves that some lesser breeze had piled lightly in house-corners, and whirls them along in its career of devastation.

Now, that the private concerns which we still have to relate may be clearly understood, we absolutey must preface them with some attempt at an account of these public developments, and, to do so, must also turn back to a somewhat earlier period of the story.

Chapter XXVIII

After the uprising of Martinmas and the day following, plenty appeared, as if by a miracle, to have returned once more to Milan. There was bread in quantities at all the bake-shops, the price was what it had been in more prolific years, and flour was proportionately cheap and abundant. Those who had lent themselves during those two days to making the hue-and-cry, and maybe to something more, now (barring the few that were arrested) had matter for self-commendation, and it is not to be imagined that they refrained from exercising their privilege, once the first fear of arrest had passed over. In the public squares, at the street-corners, in the tap-rooms, there was open jubilation, men congratulating one another and boasting between clenched teeth that now they had found a way to get bread cheap. Yet under all the hilarity and swaggering there ran (as how should there not have run?) an undercurrent of uneasiness, a presentiment that this state of things could not endure. They laid siege to bake-shops and grist-mills, as they had already done during the former period of artificial and transitory abundance produced by Antonio Ferrer's schedule of prices. Every one used up supplies unsparingly. Those who had some cash invested it in bread and flour. Chests, firkins and boilers were all turned into magazines. Thus, in their rivalry to enjoy the prevailing depressions of prices, they rendered, I do not say their long duration impossible, which it was already, but their momentary continuance always more difficult.

At length, on the fifteenth of November, Antonio Ferrer, *de orden de Su Excelencia,* promulgated a decree forbidding all who possessed grain or flour at home to buy either much or little, and all indiscriminately, to buy more than a two days' requirement, *under pecuniary and corporal penalties at his excellency's discretion,* enjoining civil functionaries and private individuals

to denounce transgressors, and directing judges to conduct investigations in houses that might be designated to them; but at the same time ordering bakers to keep their shops well stocked *under penalty, in case of default, of five years in the galleys, and aggravation of sentence at the discretion of his excellency.* If any one can imagine such a decree carried into execution, he must have a robust imagination. Certainly, had they executed all those which were promulgated at this period, the Duchy of Milan must have had at least as many men following the sea as Great Britain has today.

Be that as it may, the bakers had not only to be commanded to make bread, but to be supplied with the requisite materials. The plan was conceived (as, in times of scarcity, it always becomes an object of study how to convert into bread such products as ordinarily are consumed under some other form)—the plan was conceived, I say, of introducing rice into the composition of so-called half-and-half bread. Then, on the twenty-third of November, appeared a decree sequestrating, at the order of the director of supplies and of the tribunal of twelve, half of the undressed rice (*risone* it was then called, and is still) in any one's possession, and imposing as a penalty on whosoever disposed of it without those gentlemen's permission the loss of his grain and a fine of three crowns a bushel. Nothing could be fairer, as every one will see.

But this rice had to be paid for, and at a price unconscionably disproportionate to that of bread. The burden of making up the enormous deficit had been imposed on the city, but the council of decurions, which had assumed this obligation in its name, moved, on the same twenty-third of November, to represent to the governor the impossibility of continuing the subsidy any longer. The governor, by a decree of December 7, fixed the price of the before-described rice at twelve *lire* the bushel and mulcted all who either asked more or refused to sell, with the loss of their grain and a pecuniary fine of as much more, *and aggravation of the pecuniary and corporal penalties, even to service in the galleys, at the discretion of his excellency, according to the nature of the case and the rank of the offender.*

The price of dressed rice had already been fixed before the uprising; as, most likely, had been also the legal (or, to use the term that was to become celebrated in modern annals, the maximum) price of wheat and the more ordinary grains in other decrees which have not come before us.

A low price being thus established on bread and flour in Milan, it followed as a consequence that people flocked in from the country to buy. To remedy this objection, as he designates it, Don Gonzalo, by another decree, of December 15, made it unlawful to take away from the city more than twenty *soldi* worth of bread, under pain of losing the bread and paying a fine of twenty-five crowns, *and, in case of inability to pay, two applications of the rack in public, and aggravation of sentence,* as usual, *at the discretion of his excellency.* On the twenty-second of the same month (we do not understand such tardiness) he promulgated similar regulations for flour and grain.

The populace had sought to create abundance by pillage and incendiarism; the government now sought to maintain it by the galley and the rack. The measures were fitted together well enough; but what they had to do with the end for which they were designed, the reader can see for himself—as he will presently see how far they availed to produce it. It is also easy to observe, and not unprofitable to remark, the necessary connection that exists among these curious provisions; each was the inevitable consequence of its predecessor, and all collectively of the first, which disposed of bread so far below the real price—the price, that is, which would have resulted naturally from the ratio of demand and supply. To the populace such an expedient has always appeared, and must needs have appeared, as conformable to equity as it is easy of execution. It is no more than natural, therefore, that amid the distress and suffering of famine they should wish for it, clamor for it, and, if possible, make their wish law.

Then, as the consequences begin gradually to make themselves felt, it becomes the duty of those who are responsible, to come to the relief of each edict with a prohibition forbidding men to do what the first ordinance encouraged. Here we may be per-

mitted to call attention, in passing, to a singular coincidence. In a country and at a period of history close to our own, the most notorious as well as the most noteworthy period of modern times, men had recourse in similar circumstances to like expedients (the same substantially, it might be said, the sole difference being one of proportions, and occurring in almost the same order) in spite of the greatly changed conditions and the great advancement of knowledge in Europe generally and in that country, perhaps, more than anywhere else. And all because the great mass of the people were able, for a long time, to make their judgment of things triumph and to force the hand, as we say, of the legislators.

Thus, to return to ourselves, there had been, on the last analysis, two principal results achieved by the riot: the actual destruction and loss of foodstuffs during the uprising itself, and, during the maintenance of the price-schedule, reckless, wholesale wastefulness of the paltry reserves, which still had to suffice until the next harvest. To these general effects must be added the execution of four unfortunate roisterers, who were hanged as leaders of the uprising; two of them in front of the Bakery *delle Grucce,* two at the head of the street where the house of the director of supplies was situated.

For the rest, the historical narratives of the period are so desultory that they do not even inform us how or when this violent regulation of price ended. If, in default of positive records, we may be allowed to throw out conjectures on the point, we incline to the opinion that it was abolished shortly before or after December 24, which was the day of the execution. And as for edicts, we find no more dealing with the food situation after the last we have cited of the twenty-second of the same month; whether it be that they have perished, or escaped our researches, or whether, finally, the government, disheartened, if not disillusioned, at the futility of its remedies and overwhelmed by the progress of events, simply left them to run their course.

True, we find in the relations of more than one historian (more bent as they were on describing great events than on remarking their cause and progress) the picture of the country, and more

particularly of the city, during the late winter and the spring. By this time the disproportion between the supply of victuals and the demand, which was the real cause of the harm, was operating with full force and without let or hindrance. This disproportion had been increased, rather than eliminated, by the government's remedies, which produced only a temporary suspension of the effect, and was not wiped out even by considerable importations of foreign grains—traffic in which was hampered by the scantiness of public and private funds, the destitution of adjacent districts, the poverty, slowness and embarrassments of transportation, and even by the laws themselves, whose tendency was to produce and maintain a low price. The following sketch of the famine is a copy from the heartrending original.

At every step one came upon closed shops. The factories were in great part deserted. The streets presented a spectacle which is indescribable—one endless procession of misery, one perennial abode of suffering. Professional beggars, now become a minority, were lost in the confusion of a new multitude of mendicants and reduced at times to contesting alms with those from whom in former days they had received it. Here were clerks and apprentices, dismissed from the service of their masters, who, in turn, were living sparingly on their former profits or their capital, now that their daily income was diminished or entirely cut off; shopkepeers themselves, for whom the stoppage of business had meant bankruptcy and ruin; artisans, and even master-craftsmen, of all trades and arts, the commonest as well as the most refined, the most necessary as well as the most superfluous, wandering from door to door and from street to street, standing at the corners or huddled on the flags along the front of the houses and churches, pleading pitifully for a dole or halting between their needs and their yet unsubdued sense of shame—all of them emaciated and debilitated to the last degree, shivering with the cold and the hunger, their ragged garments scarce covering their nakedness, yet still betraying tokens of a former respectability, as their abjectness and inaction did not entirely disguise habits of industry and independence. Scattered among the pathetic throng and forming no small part of it were

servants sent adrift by their employers, now fallen from their former competency into destitution, or, no matter what their opulence, unable in such times to maintain their ordinary pomp of attendance. Add to all these diverse victims of indigence a number of others accustomed to live off the labor of others—children, wives, old men and women, grouped about their former supporters or wandering in some other direction, begging.

There were also to be seen (and one could distinguish them by their dishevelled tufts, their ragged frippery, or even by an indefinable something in their bearing and movements—that impress which habit stamps upon the countenance all the more deeply and plainly as the habit is more unusual) many of the blackguardly race of bravos who, having lost their infamous livelihood through the general misfortune, now took to begging the bread of charity. Subdued by hunger, striving with others now only in suppliance, cowed, walking as if in a dream, they slowly dragged themselves along those same streets which they had so often traversed with heads held high, suspicion and ferocity in their glance, clad in rich and curious liveries, with weapons of rare workmanship dangling by their sides and plumes waving gaily, reeking with perfume, exquisitely groomed; and humbly held out the hand which had so often been raised in insolence to threaten or in treachery to strike.

But perhaps the most repulsive, as well as the most pathetic, spectacle was that presented by the peasants, as they walked along singly, in pairs, or entire families together—husbands, wives with infants at their breasts or lashed to their shoulders, children clinging to the parents' hands, grandsires hobbling along behind. Some of these were refugees, who, seeing their homes invaded and plundered by the soldiery of local garrisons or troops on the march, had fled in despair. Not a few of them, to excite greater compassion and heighten the effect of their misery, displayed the welts or scars of blows which they had received in defending the last remnants of their provisions or in fleeing from a blind and brutal licentiousness. Others had escaped from this particular scourge but had been driven into exile none the less by two others, from which no corner was

immune, barrenness and the military levies,—more exacting now than ever, to satisfy what were designated as the needs of war, —and wended their way to the city, as to the ancient seat and last stronghold of wealth and pious munificence.

More readily than by their embarrassment and hesitating air, the newcomers could be distinguished by their amazement and vexation at finding this plethora, this competition of misery at the goal where they had counted on becoming unique objects of compassion and on monopolizing attention and assistance. Their fellows who had already been on the streets for some time, keeping body and soul together with the precarious contributions they received,—so disproportionate to their needs,—presented in their expression and demeanor a picture of deeper and more hopeless consternation. Their clothing was of every variety—the clothing, that is, of those who could be said to be still clothed. Various also were the types of feature: anemic faces from the lowlands, sunburnt countenances from the upland and the hill-country, and the ruddy complexions of mountaineers; but all uniformly pinched and distorted, their lips sunken, an expression midway between sullenness and stupidity in their stare, their hair dishevelled, their beards unkempt, their stalwart bodies, inured to brawn-making fatigues, now wasted away by distress, the skin drawn tight over their bony arms, shanks and fleshless breasts, which were half visible through the disarray of their tatters. Not less painful than the sight of this blasted virility, but painful in a different way, was the sight of nature succumbing more unresistingly and sinking to still lower depths of helplessness and exhaustion in those of tenderer years and a weaker sex.

Here and there along the street in the shelter of a wall one saw little heaps of straw, now trampled and worn to nothing and foul with refuse. Still such filth stood for gifts and kindness and charity. They were pallets which had been lent to some of these outcasts that they might have a place to rest their heads at night. Now and again one might see lying or sprawling there even by day some poor creature whom weariness or hunger had robbed of his strength and even the power of standing on his

legs. Sometimes the tenant of this pitiful couch was a corpse. At other times men might be seen to fall in a heap without any warning and remain lifeless on the pavement.

Beside some of these litters could also be seen the stooping form of a passer-by or neighbor moved by spontaneous compassion for the occupants. In certain quarters there were evidences of relief that was planned by a larger foresight and set in motion by a hand which was both rich in resources and practiced in wholesale well-doing; and that hand was the good Federigo's. He had chosen six priests whose eager and unflagging charity was seconded by a robust constitution. Dividing them into pairs, he assigned to each pair a third part of the city to patrol with porters following after laden with various foods, other restoratives of a swifter and subtler sort and clothing. Each morning the three patrols set out in different directions, and wherever they saw one of these abandoned wretches lying in the street, they approached and ministered to each according to his needs. Such as were already in their agony and beyond the reach of corporal nourishment received the consolations and last attentions of religion. To the hungry they distributed soup, eggs, bread and wine; for others, in a more advanced stage of starvation, they had strong meat-infusions and concentrated foods, as well as heavier wines, first reviving the recipients, if there was need, with spirits.

Nor did this succor end here. The good shepherd had determined that, at least as far as he could reach, relief should be effectual and not merely temporary. To such of the poor creatures as recovered, through his first aid, strength sufficient to bear about the weight of their bodies, was given a trifle of money, lest their reawakened needs and the absence of any other resources should quickly reduce them to their former plight. For the others shelter and subsistence were solicited at the nearest house. Where the owner was well-to-do they were most frequently received out of charity, the cardinal's name being sufficient recommendation; where the means did not match the goodwill, the master of the house was asked to take the sufferer in as a boarder, the terms were agreed upon, and a first installment

was paid on account. The patrols then gave a memorandum of these refugees to the parish priests, who were to make regular visitations; and they themselves followed the case up.

It goes without saying that Federigo did not confine his attention to these extremes of suffering nor wait to be aroused by the evil until it was already desperate. His burning and comprehensive charity could not but feel the call of every need and exert itself in every direction, hastening to remedy what it had been unable to anticipate and multiplying its forms to meet the multiplicity of the demand. Combining all his resources, increasing his economies, appropriating funds he had been saving for other philanthropies, now reduced to a secondary importance, he had sought to turn everything into money, that he might spend it all in the relief of the famishing population. He had purchased great stores of grain and sent not a small part of it to the most destitute localities in his diocese; and, the demand still outrunning the supply, he had added shipments of salt, "by means of which," says Ripamonti, in relating the incident, "the herbs of the field and the bark of trees were converted into food."[1] Supplies of grain and money had meanwhile been distributed to the pastors of the city. He himself used to visit it quarter by quarter, dispensing alms and relieving many a poor family in secret. In the archepiscopal palace, as Alessandro Tadino, the physician, attests in a report which we shall lay frequently under contribution as we proceed, two thousand plates of rice-soup were distributed each morning.[2]

But these charitable achievements, which we may surely term gigantic when we remember that they were the efforts of a single man and the accomplishments of his own unaided fortune (because Federigo systematically refused to make himself the almoner of others), together with the disbursements of other private benefactors, who were numerous if not so open-handed, and the appropriations of the council of decurions, who appointed the tribunal of supplies as their distributing agent, were, all

[1] Historia Patria, Decade V, Book VI, page 386.

[2] *Ragguaglio dell' Origine et Giornali Successi della gran Peste Contagiosa, Venefica et Malefica, Seguita nella Città di Milano*, etc.—Milan, 1648, page 10.

combined, insignificant in comparison with the real needs. While some few famishing mountaineers were rescued from imminent death by the cardinal's charity, others were already succumbing to the same fate. The former soon exhausted their pittance and were starving again.

In certain districts, not forgotten but reserved for the future as being less afflicted by a necessarily discriminating compassion, distress was becoming fatal. Death was ubiquitous. Still the never-ending current set towards the city. And still the city struggled with the hopeless task. For, if two thousand, let us say, of the more robust and experienced competitors in the struggle for existence succeeded in getting just enough soup to keep them alive for the day, there were many more thousands left behind envying their more fortunate rivals—if, indeed, they can be termed more fortunate, when we consider that those whom they supplanted were not unfrequently their own wives or children or parents. And if, in certain sections of the city, some of the most abandoned and desperate sufferers were picked up from the gutter and revived and provided for temporarily, in a hundred other sections many more victims were sinking to the earth, or languishing, or expiring without any one to help or comfort them.

All day long the streets echoed with the confused murmur of supplication. At night it was a chorus of groans, punctuated now and then by a loud wail suddenly escaping from some soul in torture, a roar of anguish or the solemn accents of an invocation that ended in a scream.

It is a noteworthy fact that, amid such an excess of hardships and such a variety of grievances, there was not one attempt at an uprising, not one cry of mutiny—at least, there is no record of any. Still a good number of those who were living and dying in the manner we have described had been brought up to anything but patient submission. Nay, hundreds of them were the very same men who had rioted so bravely at Martinmas. Nor must we imagine that it was the example that had been made of the four scapegoats which now held them in check. What possible cogency could, not the sight, be it remarked, but the memory of others' chastisements have over the minds of a

vagrant crowd united by a common misery, who now saw themselves condemned, nay, already delivered up, to slow martyrdom? But we mortals are in general so constituted as to revolt indignantly and furiously against mediocre evils and bow our heads in silence under those that are extreme; we endure, not resignedly, indeed, but stupidly, the last possible aggravation of what we had originally pronounced insupportable.

The daily void which death made in the pitiable multitude was more than filled up before the day's end. There was a continual influx, first from the neighboring villages, then from the whole country-side, then from the other towns of the state, and finally from other cities beyond the border. At the same time there was a daily exodus of old inhabitants from the city itself. Some fled the sight of such manifold misery. Others, seeing their places taken by these new competitors in mendicancy, were embarking on a last desperate quest of assistance elsewhere—anywhere, to escape from that suffocating swarm, that frenzied rivalry of pauperism.

The opposite lines of pilgrims met, objects of mutual aversion and, at the same time, sinister omens and painful presages of the fate that awaited both at the end of their journey. But each pursued his own path, if not in the hope of changing his lot, at least with a determination not to return to climes now become hateful nor to behold again the scenes of his despair. For some the pilgrimage was short. Their strength failing utterly, they fell by the wayside and remained there, lifeless corpses to inspire still more dismal forebodings in their companions in misery, and horror, perhaps reproach, in wayfarers of another description. "I saw," writes Ripamonti, "along the street which girdles the city-wall the corpse of a woman. . . . Some half-eaten herbs protruded from her mouth and her lips seemed still to be making a spasmodic effort at mastication. . . . She had a bundle on her back, and swathed against her breast was an infant crying for the pap. . . . Some tender-hearted strangers, who had arrived on the scene, picked up the poor little waif and bore it away, performing meanwhile the first offices of maternal love."

That antithesis, so frequent in ordinary times, of raggedness

and luxury, of prodigality and destitution, had now disappeared. Rags and misery were well-nigh universal, and the nearest approach to a contrast was a bare semblance of shabby respectability. The nobility were to be seen going about dressed plainly and unpretentiously or even meanly clad and tattered; some, because the causes of the common distress had reduced their fortunes to this pass, or else given an already tottering patrimony the death-blow; the rest, because they were either afraid to provoke a desperate public with vain display or ashamed to insult the general calamity. The hated but much-respected pirates of society, who in former days had been wont to go about with their train of ruffling bravos, now slunk along with hardly an attendant, their heads hung down and their faces expressing peaceableness and interceding for it in turn. Others, who even in times of prosperity had been of more humane habits of mind and of a more modest demeanor, seemed also to be bewildered, appalled, almost dismayed, at this uninterrupted sight of a misery that exceeded not only the possibility of relief, but, I might even say, the capacity of pity. Those who had alms to give were constrained to make a melancholy choice between starvation and starvation equally acute, between extremity and extremity. No sooner was the hand of sympathy seen to approach the hand of a sufferer, than a contest arose among his fellow-sufferers. Those who retained more vigor than the rest advanced to make their importunity the stronger. The utterly prostrate, the old and the children raised their withered hands. Mothers, even afar off, held up to the beholder their weeping infants, swathed in rags and limp from inanition.

Thus passed the winter and the spring. For some time now the board of health had been representing to the tribunal of supplies the danger of contagion that impended over the city with all this misery accumulating in every quarter. At the same time it suggested that the mendicants should be received into different hospices. While time was consumed in discussing this proposal and more time in approving it, then in considering ways and means of accomplishing it, the corpses went on daily increasing in the streets, and, in the same proportion, all the accompani-

ments of misery grew apace. An alternate plan was proposed in the sessions of the tribunal of supplies, as being easier and more expeditious, that of assembling the paupers, hale and infirm, in one general asylum, the *lazaretto,* where they would be maintained and cared for at the public charge. This was the course finally decided upon, much against the advice of the health authorities, who objected that such a large gathering would increase the danger against which they wished to guard.

The *lazaretto* of Milan (in the event of these pages ever reaching the hands of such as are unacquainted with it either by sight or from the descriptions of others) is a quadrilateral, almost square, enclosure outside the city to the left of the East Gate, separated from the walls by the width of a moat and circumscribing roadway and of a mill-race insulating the structure itself. The two sides of the greater dimension are about five hundred feet long, the remaining two possibly fifteen feet less, the whole being subdivided into small cells of one story, with an unbroken arcade supported by slender columns running around three sides of the interior.

The cells were two hundred and eighty-eight or less in number; reduced in our day to a somewhat smaller total by two apertures being made, a large one in the middle and another and smaller one at the extremity of the side facing the street. At the period of our story there were only two entrances, one midway in the side which looks towards the city-wall, and a corresponding one in the side opposite. In the centre of the enclosed area there stood, and stands still, a small octagonal church.

The original destination of the edifice, which was begun in 1489 with the proceeds of a private legacy and carried on by public subscriptions and still other bequests and donations, was to receive, as the need arose, those stricken with the plague; which had been wont to break out long before this epoch and continued to do so long after, now twice and again four, six and even eight times in a century in one or another country of Europe, sometimes attacking a large part of the continent, or even sweeping through its whole length and breadth. At the

moment of which we are speaking the *lazaretto* served only as a warehouse for merchandise held in quarantine.

Now, to put it in readiness more promptly, they abated the rigor of sanitary laws, and, rushing through at top speed with the prescribed tests and fumigations, they released all the merchandise out of hand. The cells were littered with straw, supplies of food-stuffs were laid in in such quantities and of such quality as were available, and all the paupers were invited by proclamation to come and take up their abode.

Many came willingly. Those who lay prostrate by the wayside or in the public places were carried thither. Between the two classes, the muster exceeded three thousand within a few days, but a still greater multitude remained outside. Whether it was that each expected the others to decamp and leave the enjoyment of the city's bounty to a favored few, or whether it was the natural aversion which men feel to confinement, or the distrust of the poor for every favor offered to them by the wealthy and governing classes (a distrust proportioned to the mutual ignorance of the distrusted and the distrusting, the multitude of the poor and the stupidity of the laws), or the knowledge of what the intended favor actually was, or a resultant of all of these different reasons, or some other reason entirely distinct from any of them—the fact remains that the majority of the sufferers, ignoring the invitation, continued to drag their bodies painfully about the streets.

This situation becoming evident, it was decided to pass from persuasion to force. Bailiffs were sent around to drive the mendicants into the *lazaretto* and arrest such as resisted their commands, for each of which arrests the bailiff was to receive a bonus of ten *soldi*—a proof that, even in the hardest times, public money can always be found to squander. And in spite of the fact (which had been foreseen and even expressly intended by the tribunal of supplies) that a certain number of paupers quit the city in order to live—or die—in possession of their liberty, the drive was so successful that within a short time the number of inmates, between willing guests and prisoners, approached ten thousand.

It is to be presumed, although the chronicles of the period make no reference to it, that women and children were placed in separate quarters. Rules and provisions for good order were of a surety not wanting; but any one can imagine what kind of order could be established and maintained, more particularly in such times and under such circumstances, in such a vast and variegated assemblage; where volunteers were mingled promiscuously with those under duress; where professional beggars were herded with those for whom mendicancy was a necessity, a penalty and a humiliation; where, side by side with many raised in the respectable occupations of agriculture or industrialism, were to be found many others brought up on the street, in taprooms or in robber-castles, to idleness, thievery, vituperation and violence.

How this motley aggregation was lodged and fed we could form our own sad conjectures, even had we no positive information on the point—which we have. They slept huddled together in twenties and thirties to each of these narrow cells, or stretched out on a little truss of foul, ill-smelling straw in the arcade or on the bare ground. For, while it had been directed, it is true, that the straw should be fresh, plentiful and frequently changed, in reality it was wretched, scarce and never renewed. It had, likewise, been directed that the bread should be of a good quality (since what administrator has ever specified that poor materials were to be used or distributed?), but what could hardly have been obtained under ordinary circumstances for a more restricted demand, it was exorbitant to expect at such a crisis and for such a great mass of people. It was said at the time, as we find in contemporary chronicles, that the bread at the *lazaretto* was adulterated with heavy, non-nutritive foreign substances; and it is but too probable that the grievance was not an imaginary one. Even of water there was a shortage, that is, of fresh, wholesome water. The common reservoir must have been the mill-race flowing around the walls of the enclosure, and it was shallow, sluggish, sometimes muddy, and contaminated as the neighborhood and habits of this large and nondescript crowd would naturally render it.

To these different causes of mortality, the more virulent as they attacked bodies already exhausted, or at least impaired, by sickness, must be added the great inclemency of the season—obstinate rains, followed by a drought still more obstinate, and, simultaneously, premature and excessive heat. To actual evils must be added the corresponding mental reactions: the tedium and horror of imprisonment, the recollection of former pursuits, the pain of bereavements, uneasiness about absent friends, mutual repulsion and repulsiveness, and all the other feelings of rage or discouragement to which the place gave rise or the germs of which were imported thither; and, finally, the apprehension and continual spectacle of death, now resulting frequently from these combined causes and become in turn a new and potent cause of fatality itself.

It will thus be no matter for astonishment that mortality increased and prevailed to such an extent in these precincts as to take on the appearance, and, from some, receive the designation of a plague; whether it be that the concentration of causative factors did no more than intensify the action of a purely epidemic outbreak; or whether (as apparently happens during famines of less violence and duration) some prevailing form of contagion fastened on to bodies already prepared for infection by distress and malnutrition, which, aggravated by the inclemency of the weather and the accumulation of filth, the stress of suffering and the consequent exhaustion, afforded just the right soil and climate, so to speak—that is, the combination of conditions requisite for its inception, development and propagation (if a layman may be permitted to throw out these opinions, conformably to the hypothesis formulated by certain medical authorities, and latterly reiterated with many arguments and much circumspection by a scholar as painstaking as he is ingenious);[3] whether the epidemic broke out first in the *lazaretto* itself, as, judging from an obscure and inexact document, the physicians of the board of health seem to have thought; or whether, finally (and this would seem the most probable, when

[3] Del Morbo Petecchiale . . . e degli Altri Contagi in Generale, by Doctor F. Enrico Acerbi, Ch. III, par. I.

we consider how chronic and general was the distress and how high the mortality), it had already existed in the incubation stage, and, on being introduced into this stationary mob, spread with new and terrific rapidity. At all events the daily fatalities in the *lazaretto* soon exceeded one hundred.

Whilst all that is lacking to this description of the *lazaretto* may be summed up by saying that it was a place of distress both mental and physical, of terror, of sullen disaffection or outspoken rebelliousness, at the tribunal of supplies, on the other hand, there was naught but mortification, dismay, irresolution. They debated, they listened to recommendations from the board of health, and finally, they hit upon nothing more original than undoing all that had been done hitherto, with so much parade, so much expense, and so much irritation of the public feeling. The doors of the *lazaretto* were flung open and all the inmates who were not actually sick were dismissed. They took their leave with riotous joy. The city resounded anew with the old lamentations, but more feebly and sporadically. One saw again the same miserable throng; but its ranks were thinned and it was all the more pitiable for being so diminished. The sick were brought to Santa Maria della Stella, then a poorhouse, and there the greater number perished.

In the meantime the fields began to grow white. The paupers from the country went their separate ways home to reap this much-longed-for harvest. The kind Federigo dismissed them with a last effort and, at the same time, a fresh invention of his charity: each peasant who applied at the archepiscopal palace was given one *giulio* and a scythe.

With the harvest ended the famine for good and all. The mortality, from epidemic or ordinary contagion, as the case may be, went on diminishing from day to day until autumn. It was on the point of being checked entirely, when a new scourge appeared.

Many important events, of the variety more particularly dignified as historical, have happened during this interval. Cardinal Richelieu has reduced La Rochelle, as we have already related, and huddled up a peace with the King of England. His all-

powerful word in the council of His Majesty of France has proposed and carried effectual support of the Duke of Nevers, and has at the same time prevailed upon the monarch to conduct the campaign in person. While preparations were making, the Count of Nassau, the imperial commissary, served notice on the new duke at Mantua to resign his states into the hands of King Ferdinand, or else Ferdinand would send an army to occupy them.

The duke, who in still more desperate circumstances had parried such drastic and suspicious demands, now, encouraged by the nearness of French relief, parried them still more—in terms, however, which disguised and diluted his negative to the last degree, and accompanied by counter-proposals of submission still more specious, but also more meaningless. The commissary went off threatening recourse to force. In March, Cardinal Richelieu descended upon Italy with the king at the head of an army. They petitioned the Duke of Savoy for right of passage. Ensued negotiations but no definite results. After a brush in the field, in which the French had the advantage, they negotiated anew, and this time concluded an agreement, in which the duke engaged, among other things, that Cordova should raise the siege of Casale, binding himself, in the event of the latter's refusing to comply, to join forces with the French and invade the Duchy of Milan. Don Gonzalo raised the siege, thinking that he came off cheaply enough at that, and a body of French soldiery at once entered Casale to reinforce the garrison.

It was on this occasion that Achillini addressed to King Louis the famous sonnet:

"Sudate, o fochi, a preparar metalli,"[4]

and another exhorting him to hasten to the liberation of the Holy Land. But it is the fate of poets to find no hearing for their advice; and, if history affords instances of conformity to their suggestions, one may say unhesitatingly that the decisions existed previously. Cardinal Richelieu resolved, instead, to return to France for business that to him seemed more pressing. It was

[4] "Sweat, sweat, ye fires; fit metal for its work."

in vain that Girolamo Soranzo, the Venetian envoy, argued against such a resolution; the king and the cardinal, giving as much heed to Soranzo's prose as to Achillini's verses, returned with the bulk of the army, leaving behind in Susa only six thousand men to defend the pass and witness to the recent treaty.

While this army was retiring in one direction, Ferdinand's was approaching from another. It had already invaded the canton of Grisons and Valtelline and was preparing to descend upon the Milanese. Besides the ravages naturally to be feared from such a passing, positive advices had been received by the board of health that the army carried with it lurking manifestations of the plague, some trace of which was never absent from the German armies, as Varchi observes in speaking of the epidemic which they had brought with them to Florence in the preceding century. Alessandro Tadino, one of the commissioners of health (they numbered six, exclusive of the president—four magistrates and two physicians) was delegated by the board, as he himself relates in the Report which we have already quoted,[5] to represent to the governor the frightful danger which threatened the country if these troops passed through on their way to the siege of Mantua, as the rumor asserted they would. From Don Gonzalo's whole attitude it appears that he was crazy to acquire a place in history, which, in point of fact, could not but take note of him. But, as frequently happens, history has forgotten, or at least failed to record, his most memorable contribution—the reply which he made to Tadino on this occasion. He knew not what was to be done about it, he answered; the reasons of interest and reputation for which the army had been set in motion outweighed the alleged danger; that, for all that, they should take all due precautions and trust in Providence.

To take all due precautions, therefore, the two physicians on the board of health (the above-mentioned Tadino and Senator Settala, son of the celebrated Lodovico Settala) recommended to the board that the people should be enjoined under severest penalties from purchasing gear of any sort from the soldiers in

[5] Page 16.

passage. But it was impossible to explain the necessity of such a measure to the president, "a good-hearted kind," says Tadino, "who could not believe that the lives of thousands would be imperilled by contact with these people and their belongings." Let us cite this as one of the characteristic episodes of that age; because assuredly in all the annals of boards of health it has never occurred to any other president to employ similar reasoning—if reasoning it may be called.

As to Don Gonzalo, he took his departure from Milan shortly after the answer we have signalized, and his departure was as ignominious for him as was its occasion. He was retired on account of the ill success of the war, of which he had been the chief promoter and commander; and the people saddled him with responsibility for the famine endured during his administration. (What he had done for the plague, either no one knew, or, if they knew, certainly no one cared, as we shall see more conclusively as we proceed, barring only the board of health, and the two doctors in particular.)

Upon setting out, therefore, from the governor's palace in his traveling-chaise, surrounded by his bodyguard of halberdiers, with two trumpeters mounted on horseback preceding and the coaches of the nobility who escorted him forming a cortège, he was greeted with a chorus of hisses by a pack of urchins who were gathered in the cathedral-square and who then trooped higgledy-piggledy after the procession. Upon entering the street which leads to the Ticino Gate, by which he was to depart, the convoy found itself enveloped by a throng of people, some of whom had been awaiting his arrival, some attracted by the hubbub itself—the more so as the trumpeters, with the pragmatism of their calling, never once ceased winding their horns from the palace-doors to the city-gate. One of them, in the hearing which was held later on to investigate this tumult, on being reproached for having with this trumpeting of his encouraged the confusion, "Worshipful sir," he replied, "this is our calling; and if our playing liked not his excellency, he should have bade us hold our peace." But Don Gonzalo, either from reluctance to do aught that denoted timidity, or from fear of making the

mob yet more overweening, or out of sheer dismay, issued no command. The populace, which the guards had in vain tried to drive back, preceded, surrounded and followed the coaches, crying out, "The famine is leaving, the blood-sucker of the poor is leaving," and worse greetings still. As they drew near the gate, they began to heave stones, bricks, cabbage-stumps, fruit-rinds of every sort—the usual munitions, in a word, of such a host. A number scaled the walls, whence they directed a last fusillade at the coaches as they were passing out. Then they dispersed without delay.

In the room of Don Gonzalo came the Marquis Ambrogio Spinola, whose name through the wars in Flanders had already acquired the military prestige which it still enjoys.

Meanwhile the German army under the leadership of Count Rambaldo di Collato, another Italian *condottiere* of secondary, though not inconsiderable, repute, had received definite orders to proceed to the siege of Mantua, and in the month of September it entered the Duchy of Milan.

The military of that epoch was still in great part composed of soldiers of fortune enlisted by professional free-captains, acting under commission of this or that prince, and sometimes on their own account, to sell their personal services later with those of their recruits. Still more than by any fixed stipend, men were attracted to such a calling by anticipations of loot and all the allurements of licentiousness. Of stable and general discipline there was none; nor would the notion of it have harmonized easily with the semi-independent authority of the various captains. These latter were neither great sticklers themselves on points of discipline, nor, had they been so disposed, can one see how they could have established and maintained it. Their followers would either have mutinied against an innovator who took it into his head to abolish pillage, or, at the very least, would have left him to guard his standard alone.

Besides, inasmuch as the princes who hired troops after this fashion looked more to swelling their musters sufficiently to guarantee their undertaking than to keeping due proportion between their levies and their own ability to pay,—which was

usually very limited,—it came to pass that the soldier was paid tardily and then only in driblets on account, and the spoils of the invaded country supplied the deficit by a kind of tacit agreement. Hardly less celebrated than the name of Wallenstein is the phrase he made current: that it is easier to keep an army of one hundred thousand men in the field than one of twelve thousand. And this particular army of which we are speaking was made up in great measure of those same veterans who, under his leadership, had been ravaging Germany in that war which its own magnitude no less than the importance of its effects have made memorable among wars, and which has since taken its name from its duration of thirty years—the eleventh of which was then in progress. It even contained his own regiment, led by a lieutenant. The majority of the other *condottieri* had served under him, and in their number were to be found more than one of those subordinates who assisted him to the sorry end which he made four years later, and which all the world knows.

They numbered twenty-eight thousand foot and seven thousand horse. In order to reach the territory of Mantua, they had, on coming down from the Valtelline, to follow the whole length of the Adda, first in its progress through the bifurcation of the lake and later in its career as river until it empties into the Po, through whose valley their road then lay for a considerable distance still; in all, a journey of eight days on Milanese soil.

A great number of the inhabitants took refuge in the mountains, lugging with them the best of their gear and driving their live-stock on ahead. More remained at home, either to stay with their sick, or to save the house from the flames, or to keep an eye on some buried treasure; others still, because they had nothing to lose, or even in the hopes of gain. Upon arriving at the village where the first detachment was to halt, they immediately spread through this and its neighbor-hamlets and put them to the sack outright. What could be used or carried off, disappeared. The rest they destroyed or spoiled. Furniture was turned into stove-wood, houses into stables. This is to say nothing of beatings

and woundings and rapes. All the shifts and ruses practiced to conceal property generally proved unavailing and sometimes the occasion of greater damage. The soldiery, who excelled in the strategy of even this species of warfare, ransacked houses high and low, demolished masonry, threw down walls. They easily detected the freshly turned soil in gardens. They even scaled the mountains to steal the cattle. They penetrated into caves, under the leadership of village blackguards, in search of some rich fugitive, dragged him back home and by dint of threats and blows constrained him to point out his buried treasure.

At length they are departing. They have gone. The sound of drum and bugle dies in the distance. Ensue some hours of uneasy quiet. Then again the execrable rumble of drums, again the execrable blare of trumpets, announces another regiment. These, finding naught to plunder, make greater havoc with what remains, burning barrels already emptied by their fellows, the doors of rooms which had been stripped of all else, even setting fire to the house itself, and, of course, redoubling their outrages on the inhabitants. Thus, from bad to worse, for twenty days; which was the number of regiments into which the army was divided.

Colico was the first district of the duchy invaded by these demons. Thence they entered the Valsassina, and next debouched into the territory of Lecco.

Chapter XXIX

Here, among the poor panic-stricken villagers, we shall find acquaintances of our own.

Any one who failed to see Don Abbondio on the day which brought tidings all at once of the army's descent, of its approach and its behavior, does not know what fear and worry really are. "They are coming"; "There are thirty, forty, fifty thousand of them"; "They are fiends, Arians, Antichrists"; "They have pillaged Cortenuova and given over Primaluna to the flames"; "They are ravaging Introbbio, Pasturo, Barsio"; "They have reached Balabbio"; "Tomorrow they will be here" —Such were the rumors which flew from mouth to mouth. And at the same time there was a running to and fro of villagers, a stopping of passers-by by a common impulse for excited consultation, hesitating between flight and staying at home, a flocking together of the women-folk, a clawing of hair.

Don Abbondio, determined to flee,—determined the first and the most strongly of all,—still saw in each choice of route and asylum insuperable obstacles and frightful dangers. What to do and where to go, was the burden of his questions. The mountains, aside from their being hard to climb, were not secure. It was already known that the *lansquenets* clambered up like cats, even where there was hardly any sign or hope of booty. The lake was swollen. A strong wind was blowing. And besides, the majority of the watermen, fearing to be impressed into ferrying soldiers or equipment, had taken refuge with their skiffs on the other side. Some few remaining boats had put out over-weighted with people, and, between the strain on them from within and the stress of weather without, they were reported to be in instant peril of sinking. To leave the road to be pursued by the army behind and take to some distant spot, neither cart nor horse nor any other mode of

conveyance was available, and on foot Don Abbondio could not have covered much ground. Besides, he was afraid of being overtaken on the way. Bergamask soil was not so far away but that his legs could have carried him thither at one stretch; but it was known that a regiment of *cappelletti* had been despatched from Bergamo to patrol the frontiers and overawe the *lansquenets*, and they were demons in the flesh no less than the latter and would stick at no villainy they themselves could perpetrate. The poor man ran about the house, distracted almost to lunacy. He dogged Perpetua's footsteps, to discuss some plan of action. But Perpetua was busy gathering up the household bravery and hiding it in garret or cubby-hole. "Bye and bye," she would say, as she flew about breathless and preoccupied, with hands and arms full, "I shall have this gear safely stowed, and then we'll do e'en as others do."

Don Abbondio would fain detain her and discuss different alternatives, but she, what with her work and her haste, the fright, too, from which her nerves did not entirely exempt her, and her dudgeon with her master, was more intractable in this juncture than she had ever been in her whole life. "If others can make shift, so can we likewise. 'Tis not for me to say it, but your reverence is only a hindrance. Think you that no one else hath a skin to save? Is it you the soldiers are come to fight? 'Twere fitter for you to lend a hand yourself at such a time than to be holding others back with your whining and fussing."

With these and similar responses she disengaged herself, resolved that, when her strenuous task was somehow gone through with, she would take him by the hand like a child and lead him into the mountains. Left thus to himself, he would look out at the window, strain his ears, and, seeing some one pass, would cry out in a half-plaintive, half-chiding voice: "Have the charity to go fetch your pastor a horse, or a mule, or an ass. Can it be that none will help me? Oh, what a lot! Wait for me at least. Wait till you be fifteen or twenty and go with me all together, that I may not be left to my fate. Would you abandon me to the mercy of dogs? Know you not that they

be Lutherans, the bulk of them, and that to massacre a priest were a merit? Would you leave me to martyrdom? Oh, what a lot! what a lot!"

And whom did he apostrophize thus? Men bending under the weight of their poor household riches and thinking of what they had left behind, as they drove their heifers on before them and dragged their children along by the hand—these also stooped beneath their burdens—and, finally, women carrying at their breasts those who could not walk. Some trudged ahead without replying or looking up. Others would say: "Bah, your reverence! Fend for yourself, and thank your fate that you have no family to give you thought. Make shift. Take your own part."

"Alack! alack!" he would exclaim. "Oh, what a lot! what a heartless lot! Charity is fled. Every one thinketh of himself and none thinketh of me." And again he would seek out Perpetua.

"Well bethought!" quoth she. "What of the money?"

"How shall we do?"

"Give it to me. I'll bury it in the garden together with the tableware."

"But——"

"But, but, but! Give it here. Keep some coppers against our needs, and leave the rest to me."

Don Abbondio went obediently to his desk, and, extracting his small hoard, handed it over to Perpetua. "I shall bury it near the wall at the foot of the fig-tree," said she, and disappeared. Presently she returned with a basket full of stomach-fuel and an empty pack. In the bottom of the latter she hastily thrust a change of linen for herself and her master. "Your breviary at least," she said, "you will carry yourself."

"But where are we to go?"

"Whither go the rest? First let us gain the road, and then we shall hear what behooveth."

At that instant in came Agnese with a pack on her back and wearing the air of one who has an important proposal to make.

Agnese's mind had also been made up not to bide such guests,

alone as she was in the house and with some of her gold still unspent; but she had for a long time been undecided about the place of her retirement. This remainder of the wealth that had stood her in such good stead during the months of famine was the principal cause of her distress and irresolution. She had heard that, in the districts already overrun, it was those with money that fared worst, exposed as they were to the violence of the invaders and the treachery of their own fellow-citizens. True, she had confided her windfall to none but Don Abbondio, to whom she had recourse to change her gold one piece at a time, always leaving him a trifle to bestow on some one poorer than herself. But hidden money, especially when one is not used to handling great amounts, keeps its possessor in continual suspicion of the suspicions of others.

Now, as she went about hiding here and there as best she might what she could not carry along and thought of the broad-pieces sewed into her bodice, she recalled that, together with this donative, the Un-named had tendered her the most unlimited offers of service. She recalled also the stories she had heard of his castle perched up there so securely that none but the birds themselves could reach it against the master's wish. So she decided to go and beg him for shelter. She wondered how she was to make herself known to his lordship, and her thoughts reverted at once to Don Abbondio. The latter, since his famous interview with the archibishop, had been uniformly affable with her, and that the more readily because he could be so without compromising himself and because, the lovers being far away, the chance was equally remote of any request arising to try the sincerity of this benevolence. She supposed that in such a pandemonium the poor man must be still more befuddled and frightened than herself, and that the suggestion might appear acceptable to him also. She was now come to broach it. Finding him with Perpetua, she laid her proposal before the two of them.

"What say you to it, Perpetua?" inquired Don Abbondio.

"I say that it is an inspiration from above, and that we should be putting the road behind us without losing any time."

"And then, if——"

"And then, and then; we shall be well content, when we are there. This noble would do naught but kindness to his fellow-man now, as 'tis known; and he will be well content in his turn to harbor us. And the soldiers—they will surely give a wide berth to such a remote border-castle in the clouds. And then again, there will be bread to be had; for it is but ill we would fare above in the mountains, when these few morsels were gone." So saying, she arranged them in the pack on top of the linen.

"If only he be converted in good sooth?"

"And can we doubt it after all we know—after all your reverence hath seen with his own eyes?"

"And did we walk into a trap?"

"I say trap to you! With all this hemming and hawing (asking your pardon) you will never come to a decision at all. Bravo, Agnese, your thought is admirable." And, placing the pack on a table, she passed her arms through the straps and slung it over her shoulders.

"Could we not," persisted Don Abbondio, "find some man to accompany us and act as his pastor's bodyguard? Were we to fall foul of some rapscallion, such as are strolling about—more than one—what help would you two be to me?"

"More of your maundering, to lose time!" exclaimed Perpetua. "A proper moment, in faith, to go in search of a man, when each one hath his hands full already. Come; get your breviary and hat, and let us be gone."

Don Abbondio withdrew. He returned in a moment with his breviary tucked under his arm, his hat on his head and his staff in his hand, and the three of them left the house by a small door opening upon the church-square. Perpetua, more from force of habit than from any faith she had in doors or locks, turned the key and put it into her pocket. Don Abbondio cast a glance at the church in passing, muttering meanwhile to himself: "'Tis the people's; let them look to it. If they have a little nature for the house of God, they will give it thought; if not, so much the worse for them."

They cut across the fields in silence, each thinking of his own situation and turning to look (particularly Don Abbondio) at every suspicious figure, every unusual apparition. They met nobody. Every one was within doors, guarding the home, making bundles of their effects or hiding them out of sight, or else already on their way to the uplands.

After some deep and protracted sighing and an occasional ejaculation, Don Abbondio at last began to grumble more coherently. He rated the Duke of Nevers for not staying in France and having a good time playing prince, but must be Duke of Mantua in despite of the world. He arraigned the emperor for not having the sense the others lacked, and for not letting water run down hill its own way, and for not waiving some tittle of his pretensions; for, after all, be Titius or Sempronius Duke of Mantua, he would always be the emperor. But above all he took to task the governor, whose place it was to keep these pests at a distance from the country, whereas he was the very one who was urging them on. "'Twere fit," he said, "that these fine gentlemen were here to have a taste of their sport. An awful account they will have to render for it all. But meanwhile I pay the shot, who had never a finger in it."

"Spare such folk your reproaches," said Perpetua. "They are not the ones who must help us now. This is only your wonted prating (saving your presence!), that leads us nowhere in the end. Now what irketh me——"

"What now?"

Perpetua, who, during this interval of walking, had found leisure to reconsider her hurried choice of hiding-places, now began to complain of having forgotten this article and badly concealed such another, of having left a clue to guide thieves here, and there of——

"Fine work!" said Don Abbondio, now sufficiently assured of life to worry about property. "Fine work, in sooth. You did so? And where was your head?"

"What!" exclaimed Perpetua, halting for a moment and standing with arms akimbo as well as the pack permitted—

"what! You come now to reproach me, when 'twas yourself that turned my head instead of helping and encouraging me. I thought more of household matters than of my own, perhaps. Not one to lend me a hand. No; I must be Mary and Martha at once. And now, if something should go amiss, I see no help for it; I have done more than my share."

Agnese cut short these bickerings to speak in turn of her own troubles. She bemoaned not so much the inconveniences and forfeitures of the present as the vanished hopes of embracing Lucia again in the near future. It was precisely this autumn, it will be remembered, on which they had been counting, and it was not likely that Donna Prassede would come to make her *villegiatura* in these parts under such circumstances. Nay, it was more probable that, had she been here, she had already left, like all the other visitors.

The scenes through which they were passing made these thoughts of Agnese the more vivid, as they made her disappointment the more poignant. They had left the path through the field behind them and come out on the highroad—the same by which she had come to take her daughter back home for so short a time after their sojourn together at the tailor's. The village was already in sight.

"Let us go and greet those worthy souls," said Agnese.

"And also to rest a little, for I begin to have enough of this pack. And also to eat a mouthful of food," said Perpetua.

"On condition that we lose no time," concluded Don Abbondio. "We are not traveling for diversion."

They were received with open arms and looks of happy recognition—they were reminders of a good deed performed. "Do good to all thou canst," here counsels our anonymous author; "and so thou shalt the oftener meet with faces that will make thee glad."

Agnese, in embracing the goodwife, broke into uncontrollable weeping, which came as a great relief. She replied by sobs to the inquiries of the latter and of her spouse concerning Lucia.

"She's better off than we," quoth Don Abbondio. "She's snug in Milan—far from danger—safe from all deviltries."

"You are in flight, then? his reverence and companion," said the tailor.

"Just so," replied they in chorus.

"You have my poor sympathy."

"We are on the way," said Don Abbondio, "to the castle of ——."

"Well bethought. You will be as safe as in church."

"And here? you feel no fear?" inquired Don Abbondio.

"I shall explain, your reverence. As for any real sojournment (which is the term, as your reverence knoweth, that is used in polite parlance), they will not come making it here. We are too far from their path, thank Heaven! At the very most some slight raid, which may God forbid! In any event there will be time. The other poor hamlets where they would halt must be heard from first."

It was decided to rest there for a breathing-space; and, it being dinner-time, "My worshipful guests," said the tailor, "must honor my poor table. No frills, but a hearty welcome."

Perpetua alleged having a snack with her. After some protestations on one side and on the other they finally agreed to dirty only one kettle, as the saying is, and dine together.

The children had gathered in great glee around their old friend Agnese. The tailor, now all animation, bustles off a little girl (her who had carried the refreshment to the widow Mary—I wonder if the reader still remembers the incident) to go shell four early chestnuts which had been laid up in a certain corner, and put them on to roast.

"And go thou," he said to the boy, "into the garden and shake down four peaches, and bring them hither—all of them, d'ye hear? It's a trick you already know but too well." He himself went to broach a cask and his wife to seek some table-linen. Perpetua drew forth the provender. The table was set. A cloth was laid at the place of honor for Don Abbondio, together with a plate of majolica and a knife and a fork that Perpetua had in her pack. They sat down to dine, if not with great hilarity, with more of it than any of the guests had expected to experience on that day.

"What sayest thou, your reverence, of such a hurly-burly?" said the tailor. "To me it seemeth like reading the history of the Moors in France."

"What can I say? Might I not have been spared even this?"

"Still you have chosen an excellent retreat," resumed the other. "Who is there would ever think of forcing his way thither? And there will be company. 'Tis known that already many have sought its shelter, and more are arriving momentarily."

"I would fain hope," said Don Abbondio, "that we shall be well received. The worthy nobleman is not unknown to me, and when I had the honor on a former occasion to be in his company, he was affability itself."

"And to me," added Agnese, "he hath sent word by the archbishop's illustrious lordship that, whenever I need aught, I must have recourse to him."

"A famous conversion," resumed Don Abbondio. "And it still holdeth, is it not so? It still holdeth?"

The tailor proceeded to expatiate at length upon the saintly life of the Un-named; how, from being the scourge of the country-side, he had become its model and benefactor.

"And all those men he kept about him?—all that retinue?——" pursued Don Abbondio, who had more than once heard something of their subsequent history, but was not yet sufficiently assured.

"Dismissed for the most part," replied the tailor; "and those who remained have turned over a new leaf—wonderful! In one word, his castle is now become a very Thebaid. Your reverence knoweth all about the Thebaid."

He then began to talk to Agnese about the cardinal's visit.

"A great man!" he said; "truly a great man! Pity he was in such a rush that I could not show him more honor. How blithe I would be to speak with him once more—with somewhat more leisure."

On their rising from table he then showed her a print of the cardinal that he kept tacked to the door, in veneration of the personage there represented, and also to be able to tell whoever

beheld it that it was not a good likeness; for that he himself had had ample opportunity to examine the original, and in that self-same chamber.

"Was this meant for him, this here?" demanded Agnese. "It is clothed like him, but——"

"A wretched likeness, is it not?" said the tailor. "'Tis what I always say myself. We are not to be deceived, eh? But it beareth his name, if no more. 'Tis a reminder."

Don Abbondio was on tenter-hooks. The tailor engaged to find a cart to carry them to the foot of the ascent. He hurried off in search of it now, and soon returned to say that it was on the way. Turning then to Don Abbondio, "Your reverence," he said, "should you wish to take some book along with you to pass the time, I can accommodate you in a humble way. Reading is one of my diversions, too. Not your style of literature. All books in the vernacular, but still——"

"My best thanks," answered Don Abbondio; "but under such circumstances a man hath hardly head enough left to get through with what duty prescribeth."

While guests and hosts were venting their thanks or deprecating them, exchanging salutations and good wishes, invitations and promises to call on the return trip, the cart has drawn up before the door. The shoulder-packs are put in, the passengers take their places, and the second stage of the journey is begun with somewhat more contentment and peace of mind than marked the beginning.

The tailor had told Don Abbondio the truth in regard to the Un-named. From the day we took our leave of him he had perservered without intermission in doing what then he had resolved upon: repairing wrongs, making overtures of peace, succoring the poor—doing whatever good the occasion permitted, in one word. The courage he had formerly displayed in attacking others or defending himself he now employed in refraining from either. He always went about alone and unarmed, prepared for whatever might betide after all his violence, and convinced that it would be a fresh outrage to defend one who was in debt to so many and on so many scores; convinced,

likewise, that any injury done him now would be an offence against God, indeed, but no more than just retribution as concerned himself, and that he, less than any other, was justified in constituting himself the avenger of such an injury. For all that, he continued to be as inviolate as when he and his host of bravos bristled with weapons as a protection.

The recollection of his former ferocity and the spectacle of his present meekness—a ferocity that must have left such an arrears of ungratified vengeance and a meekness that seemed to make retaliation so easy—conspired, instead, to win for him a feeling of admiration which served as his greatest safeguard. He represented a force that none had been able to humble and that now humbled itself voluntarily. The rancor which his disdain and his victims' fear had engendered in the days gone by, was disarmed now in the presence of this newly acquired humility; they had obtained, contrary to all expectation and without incurring any danger, a satisfaction which the most prosperous vendetta could not have promised them—the satisfaction of seeing such a man repenting of his wrong-doing and sharing in the common indignation with which it was pursued. Many, whose bitterest and most intense chagrin had for years been that they could see no prospect of their ever gaining a vantage-ground whence they could avenge some signal injustice, now, meeting him unattended, unarmed and making as if he would offer no resistance, felt no other impulse than to show him honor.

By this voluntary abasement his demeanor and presence had acquired, unknown to him, something indefinably nobler and more lofty; because it revealed more plainly than ever his contempt of danger. Even the hatred of the most passionate and untamed natures was inhibited, as it were, or overawed by the public veneration for this philanthropic penitent. To such lengths did this veneration go that he frequently found himself embarrassed to parry the demonstrations of it and was careful to erase somewhat from his countenance and attitude his inward sentiments of compunction, so as to subtract from his real abasement and thus from the completeness of the ovation. He had

chosen for himself the lowest place in the church, and there was no fear of any robbing him of it—it would have been like usurping a post of honor. To take the offensive against such a man, or even to treat him with scant courtesy, might well savor more of sacrilege than of insolence and vileness; and even those who were restrained by the known feeling of others in this particular were not devoid of a greater or less share in the common sentiment themselves.

These same causes and others besides sheltered him from the vengeance of the law and procured for him an immunity about which he gave himself no concern. His rank and family connections, which had always been a sort of protection, stood him in still better stead now that to the renown and obloquy of that name were added the prestige of exemplary conduct and the glory of conversion. Magistrates and pillars of society had rejoiced over the latter event as publicly as the people, and it would have appeared a strange proceeding to strike juridically at one who was the subject of such felicitation. Besides, a government involved in continuous and frequently unsuccessful warfare against spirited and recurring insurrections might well be sufficiently gratified in finding itself rid of the most defiant and annoying of all without inviting new complications; the more so since this conversion produced reparations which the civil authorities were not in the habit of obtaining or even of demanding.

Harassing a saint, furthermore, appeared a poor way to save their faces for not having been able to subdue a culprit, and the example they would have set in punishing him could only result in deterring others like him from becoming inoffensive citizens. Probably, also, the part which Cardinal Federigo had taken in the conversion and the association of his name with that of the Un-named served the latter as a sort of sacred buckler. And in such a state of affairs and ideas and with such relations existing between the spiritual and the civil powers,—at odds as they often were without ever seeking to annihilate each other, but, on the contrary, mingling with their hostilities tokens of recognition and protestations of deference, and also, as fre-

quently happened, co-operating towards a common end while maintaining a strict irreconcilableness,—the friendly advances of the former might be construed to carry with them, if not absolution, at least indulgence from the latter, when the spiritual had used its unaided efforts to bring about results which both desired.

Thus did the singular character—who, had he fallen, both great and small would have hastened to trample under foot—now that he had voluntarily bowed himself to the earth meet with forbearance from all and reverence from not a few.

True, there were many who must have been anything but grateful at this sensational transformation: so many hired agents of crime, so many criminal allies who lost the mainstay on whom they had been wont to depend and, probably at the very moment when they were expecting to hear news of the consummation of some plot, found that all its threads had suddenly been broken off. What diverse feelings his conversion excited in the ruffians who were with him at the time and heard the announcement from his own lips, we have already seen: stupefaction, pain, dejection, anger—a little of everything but contempt or hatred. It was the same story with other stipendiaries whom he kept scattered in different localities, the same with his accomplices in high places, when they learned the terrible news, and all for the self-same reasons. Much hatred, on the contrary, as I find in the before-cited passage of Ripamonti, came of it for Cardinal Federigo. They regarded him as an interloper and a marplot. The Un-named had wished to save his soul; no one could reasonably find fault with him.

Gradually the majority of his household cutthroats, unable to accommodate themselves to the new discipline and foreseeing no probability of its being changed, had taken their departure. Some sought a new master—sought him, perhaps, among the former enemies of him whom they had left. Some took service in one of the regiments of Spain or Mantua or some other belligerent. Some took to the highway to make war in a small way on their own account; and still others were content with a life of unruly vagabondage. Those who held themselves at

his call in foreign parts would naturally have followed similar lines. Of that number, finally, who had been able to accustom themselves to the new style of life or who had voluntarily embraced it, the majority, being natives of the valley, had returned to their neglected fields or to some trade learned in early life and then abandoned. The non-residents remained in the castle as servants. Both classes, as if blessed with their master's blessing, got along, like him, without inflicting or receiving any injury, unarmed and respected.

But when, at the appearance of the German hordes, fugitives from invaded or menaced villages knocked at his castle seeking asylum, the Un-named, thoroughly delighted that his walls should have been sought as a refuge by the weak, who had long regarded them from afar off as a monstrous bugbear, received the refugees with expressions rather of gratitude than of courtesy. He sent word broadcast that his house would be open to whosoever wished to take refuge there and gave his attention at once to putting not only the castle but also the valley in a state of defence, in case either *lansquenets* or *cappelletti* should wish to come and try some of their deviltry. He called together the remaining servants, few but able—like the verses of Torti.[1] He spoke of the fine opportunity God was giving them and him to exert themselves for once in aiding the neighbor they had so much oppressed and terrified, and, in that natural tone of com-

[1] [Giovanni Torti, another of Manzoni's immediate coterie of friends, a poet in whom Manzoni saw great promise, but who, either through the indolence about which Manzoni was forever rallying him or for some other reason, exercised his talent very rarely. The spirit in which this thrust was made will be plain from an extract of a letter written by Manzoni shortly after the appearance of "I Promessi Sposi."

"Two worthy youths of Genoa, with a certain air of making me pose as a grandsire in their presence, praised me for that sally about 'few' and 'valiant.' You may not remember, but Torti surely. 'A happy stroke,' said one; 'it could not have been hit off better—' 'Ah! worthy Torti,' said I. 'We are such friends.' And here I tugged at my cravatte. 'Truly what we have from him makes us wish—' began the other; but here I interposed something else. If the topic had come up again, I was ready to confess that the worthy Torti had, in reality, wasted a quarter of an hour or so in his lifetime." Carteggio, vol. II, page 300.—TRANSLATOR.]

mand which takes obedience for granted, he announced the general nature of their duties, and, above all, he prescribed the circumspection they should use in order that the people who were coming for shelter might see in them nothing but friends and protectors.

He next ordered them to fetch down from the garret the fire-arms, swords and pikes which had been lying there in a heap for some time past, and distributed them to the household. He sent word to the peasants and tenantry of the valley that they should repair to the castle armed, accordingly as the news reached them. If they had no weapons, they were supplied. Certain ones were selected to act as officers with others under their command. Pickets were established at the entrances and at different points within the valley, along the acclivity and at the castle-gates. The manner and hours of changing guard were fixed upon as in the field, or as the custom had prevailed in that same castle in the days of its lawlessness.

Off by themselves in a corner of the garret were the weapons which had been reserved to the master's personal use: his famous carbine, muskets, swords, broadswords, pistols, knives, daggers, thrown on the floor or ranged along the wall. Not a servant touched them, but they agreed among themselves to ask him which he wanted. "None," he replied; and whether it was the result of a vow or a mere resolution, he always went unarmed at the head of this fair approximation to a garrison.

At the same time he had put to work other men- and women-servants or dependents, preparing a lodging for as many additional persons as might be, setting up cots, arranging mattresses, spreading quilts on the floor of chamber or saloon, now turned into dormitory. He had also ordered great stores of provisions for the guests whom Providence might send, and who went on, in fact, increasing from day to day. Meanwhile he was never at rest; forever in and out of the castle, uphill and downhill, hither and thither through the valley, establishing, reenforcing or visiting pickets, keeping an eye on everything, showing himself everywhere, establishing order and maintaining it, by a word, by a look, by his very presence. Within doors or along

the road he bade welcome to all who came. And all alike, whether they had seen him before or saw him now for the first time, would look up in an ecstasy, forgetting for a moment the trouble and terror that had driven them to this aerie, and then turn, when he had passed by, and look at him again as he continued on his way.

Chapter XXX

Although the greater influx was not from the side by which our fugitives were approaching but from the opposite opening of the valley, they still began to find companions in travel and misfortune, who had come out, or were just coming out, of lanes and crossroads into the main thoroughfare. In such circumstances to meet is to be acquainted. Each time that the cart caught up with a pedestrian, there was an interchange of questions and replies. Some had fled, like our own refugees, before the arrival of the soldiers. Some had heard their drums and bugles in the distance. Some had seen them. The latter described their looks in the colors with which fear is wont to depict its object.

"We are lucky, after all," said the two women. "Thanks be to God. Perish our chattels; we at least are safe."

But Don Abbondio could not find so much occasion for self-congratulation. Nay, he began to take alarm at this concourse of people, and the still greater concourse from the other direction of which he heard tell. "Oh, what a predicament!" he would mutter to his companions, when no one was by. "What a predicament! Know ye not that to gather all these folk together in one place is the same as to drag the soldiers hither by force? Everything hid, everything spirited away, nothing to be found in the houses; they will think all the riches are here. They will come without one doubt. Alack-a-day! on what have I embarked!"

"Oh! they have something else to do than come up hither," replied Perpetua. "They have their own ways to go. Besides, I have always heard it said that in danger 'tis well to keep together."

"Keep together! keep together!" rejoined Don Abbondio. "Poor silly woman! Know you not that one *lansquenet* could

swallow a hundred of these? And besides, did they wish to commit such madness, 'twould be a merry lark, would it not? to be in the midst of a battle. Alack-a-day! 'Twere a less evil to have taken to the mountains. What business have they all to be flocking to one place!——The pests!" he would continue to mutter in a lower tone. "Look at them all, following one after the other higgledy-piggledy, like sheep without any sense."

"At that rate," quoth Agnese, "they might say the same of us."

"Hold your peace," said Don Abbondio. "It boots not to be chattering. What's done is done. We're here, and here we must stay. It will be as Heaven directs, but fair fall my bones."

But it was a worse story still when, at the entrance to the valley, they saw a good-sized picket of men under arms, some standing at the entrance to the house and the rest in a lower room. It looked like a barracks. He regarded them out of the tail of his eye. They were not the same monsters it had been his fate to look upon on his first painful pilgrimage, or, if they were, they had been entirely transformed. But for all that it is incredible what annoyance the sight caused him. "Alack, alack!" he soliloquized. "See whether they be not bent on madness. It could not be otherwise. I should have expected as much from one of his kidney. But what would he? make war? become a king on his own account? Alack! alack! In times when one would seek to hide under the earth, this man neglects no means to attract attention, to make a show of himself. 'Twould appear he was inviting them!"

"Your reverence can see now," said Perpetua, "whether or not there be stout lads to defend us. Let the soldiers come, with a wanion. These men are not like our milk-and-water garrison that were good for nothing but to show their heels."

"Hold your tongue!" commanded Don Abbondio in a low but angry tone of voice. "Hold your tongue! You know not what you are saying. Pray God the soldiers be in a hurry or that they come not to know of what is towards here—that they are turning this place into a fortress. Know you not that taking fortresses is their trade? They want nothing better. For them

to make an assault is like going to a wedding. All they find is theirs, and the poor people are put to the sword. Alack! alack! Enough. I shall see if there be not some place of safety to be found on top of these crags. They'll not catch me in a battle; oh, never fear; they'll not catch me in a battle."

"If you are afraid of being defended and helped, too——" Perpetua was beginning; but Don Abbondio interrupted her rudely, but always in an undertone. "Hush, and take heed not to repeat what we are saying. Remember that it requires here to bear a smiling face and approve all that one sees."

At the Malanotte they came across another outpost of armed men, to whom Don Abbondio doffed his hat, saying to himself meantime: "Alas! alas! I am come straight into an encampment." At this point the cart halted, and they got down. Don Abbondio paid the driver hurriedly and dismissed him. With his two companions he then addressed himself to the ascent. The sight of these places conjured up before his imagination and mingled with the anguish of the present the recollection of what he had suffered here before. Agnese also, who had never looked upon these scenes but who had formed a fantastic picture of them which always rose before her mind as often as she thought of Lucia's dreadful journey, now, on seeing the reality, felt these cruel memories with a fresh and sharper pang. "Oh, your reverence!" she exclaimed; "only to think that poor Lucia passed along this very road!"

"Will you hold your peace? senseless shrew of a woman!" Don Abbondio screeched into her ear. "Is this a place for such reflections? Know you not that we are in his home? A happy chance that no one overheard you. But if you let your tongue wag at this rate——"

"Oh!" replied Agnese; "now that he is a saint——"

"Hush!" rejoined Don Abbondio. "Think you that we can say all that passeth through our heads to saints without ceremony? Think rather of thanking him for his goodness to you."

"Oh, as to that, I had already given it thought. Do you deem me altogether ignorant of what is befitting?"

"It is befitting not to say things that might offend, especially

one who is not wont to hear them. And bear in mind well, both of you, this is no place for gossip and idle talk. 'Tis the house of a great nobleman—that ye already know. You can see for yourself what company he keepeth. People of every sort are flocking in. So, prudence, if ye have it in you. Weigh well your words, speak little, and that only when it needs. Silence maketh no blunders."

"Your reverence is worse than we with your eternal——" Perpetua was resuming. But, "Peace!" commanded Don Abbondio in an undertone, hastily doffing his hat at the same time and making a profound bow. Looking up, he had seen the Un-named coming towards them. He in turn had seen and recognized Don Abbondio and hastened his steps to meet him.

"Your reverence," said he on coming close, "I would fain have offered thee my house under happier circumstances; but at least I am well content to be of some service in anything."

"Trusting in the great kindness of your illustrious lordship," replied Don Abbondio, "I have taken the liberty of coming to trouble you in this sad emergency; and, as your illustrious lordship seeth, I have also made bold to bring companions along. This is my housekeeper——"

"She is welcome," interrupted the Un-named.

"And this," continued Don Abbondio, "is a good woman who hath already experienced your goodness—the mother of her—of her——"

"Of Lucia," volunteered Agnese.

"Of Lucia!" exclaimed the Un-named, turning towards Agnese with bowed head. "My goodness—mine! Eternal God! The goodness is thine to come hither—to—me—to this house. Thrice welcome! Thou bringest a benediction with thee."

"The idea!" said Agnese. "I come only to upset your lordship. Nay," she continued, approaching his ear, "I must also thank your lordship for——"

The Un-named cut short her eloquence with anxious inquiries concerning Lucia, and, the news being told, he turned to escort his new guests to the castle, which he did in spite of their polite remonstrances. Agnese glanced at her pastor as

who should say: See now if it needed that thou shouldst step between us twain with counsels.

"Have they come as far as thy parish?" asked the Un-named.

"Nay, your lordship; I was loath to await such fiends," replied Don Abbondio. "The Lord alone knoweth whether I should have escaped alive from their hands to be a nuisance to your illustrious lordship."

"Bravo; be of good cheer," rejoined the Un-named; "for now thou art safe. They'll not come hither; but if they wish to try, we're ready to receive them."

"Let us hope they will not come," said Don Abbondio. "I hear," he added, pointing to the mountains closing in the valley on the opposite side—"I hear there is another gang of rovers over there, but—but——"

"'Tis true," replied the Un-named; "but doubt not we are ready also for them."

"Between two fires," commented Don Abbondio to himself—"right between two fires. Whither have I been decoyed? and by two gossips! And this man seemeth to revel in it! What people there be in the world!"

Upon entering the castle the Un-named had the two women ushered into a chamber of the women's quarters; which occupied three sides of the inner courtyard in the postern wing of the edifice situated on a beetling ledge of rock over a yawning chasm. The men were lodged to the right and left of the outer court and in the wing facing upon the esplanade. The intervening apartments, separating the one court from the other and connecting them by means of a vast passageway opposite the main entrance, were in part occupied by provisions and in part served as a repository for the chattels which the refugees wished to leave in safe keeping. In the men's quarters there were some rooms destined for the clergy who might apply. The Un-named accompanied Don Abbondio to this section personally, and he was the first to take possession.

For twenty-three or twenty-four days our fugitives remained in the castle in the midst of a continual hubbub and surrounded by a large company, which, during the first days, was ever on

the increase, but without any extraordinary incidents. Not a day passed, perhaps, without the call to arms. Either *lansquenets* were coming on this side, or *cappelletti* had been seen on that. At each alarm the Un-named would send scouts to reconnoitre; and, if there were need, he would take along with him a force that he always kept in readiness for the purpose and sally forth from the valley in the direction of the indicated danger. It was a strange thing to see a file of men armed cap-a-pie and marching in regular military formation led by an unarmed captain. The greater number of times it was only stray foragers or looters, who fled before being overtaken. But once, in giving chase to some of these marauders, to teach them to keep away from these parts in future, the Un-named was apprised that a near-by hamlet had been invaded and put to the sack. It was some stragglers from the different companies of *lansquenets* who had remained behind to plunder and had joined forces. They were now swooping down unexpectedly on the hamlets nearest to the halting-places of the army and pillaging the inhabitants, whom they subjected to all manner of outrage. The Un-named made a brief address to his men and led them to the afflicted village.

They arrived unexpectedly. The miscreants, who had believed they were going only to pillage, now, seeing themselves beset by troops in military array and ready to give battle, left off their looting and took to flight helter-skelter in the direction whence they had come. The Un-named pursued them a short distance. Then, calling a halt, he remained awhile waiting possible developments and finally returned. In passing through the rescued village it is incredible what plaudits and benedictions were lavished on the liberator's standard and person.

Within the castle, notwithstanding the fortuitous gathering of so many persons differing in rank and habits, age and sex, there never arose any disorder of consequence. The master had set guards at different points to forestall any improprieties, and they fulfilled their office with that assiduity which every one displayed who had to render an account to his tribunal.

Besides, he had requested the ecclesiastics and the more in-

fluential of the refugees to circulate among their companions and keep an eye on conditions. As often as was possible, he also made his rounds and put in an appearance in every quarter. But even in his absence the recollection of whose house it was they occupied served as a check on those who needed to be restrained. Besides, they were all fugitives and therefore generally predisposed to quietness. The thought of their homes and possessions, the remembrance of relatives or friends left behind to face the danger, the reports from without, as they dampened their spirits, also operated to maintain and emphasize these pacific dispositions.

There were not lacking, however, others on whom trouble weighed more lightly, men of firmer nerves and more buoyant courage, who sought to pass the days in jollity. They had left their homes because they lacked power to defend them; but they saw no use in crying over spilt milk or in contemplating in fancy the destruction which they would soon enough witness with their eyes. Families of friends had traveled thither in company, or been reunited there, or new friendships had sprung up; and thus the crowd was broken off into cliques according to their different dispositions and habits. Such as were blessed with money and considerateness went down to dine in the valley, where some jerry-built restaurants had been erected for the occasion. In some of these the eating was seasoned with sighs—it was not permitted to speak of aught but disaster. In others disaster was not mentioned except to say that it was tabooed. To such as could not, or would not, incur these expenditures, bread, soup and wine were distributed at the castle. Other tables were spread daily for the guests whom the master had expressly invited, and among these latter were our three friends.

Agnese and Perpetua, not to be eating the bread of pure charity, had asked to be employed in the services which such lavish hospitality called for, and in this occupation was passed a good part of each day. The rest was spent chatting with friends they had made or with poor Don Abbondio. The latter had nothing to do, but that bothered him not—fear kept him company. The fear of an assault, I really believe, had left him;

or, if some remnants of it still persisted, it was but a minor worry; because, reflect as little as he might, he must have understood how gratuitous it was. But the thought of the adjacent country overrun in every direction with military riff-raff, the daily spectacle of weapons and armed men, the sight of this castle weighing on him like an incubus, the apprehension of so many things that might arise under present circumstances—all conspired to keep him in a state of continual, though undefined, general dread. This is to say naught of the anguish of thinking about his poor devastated home.

In all the time that he staid in this asylum he never withdrew farther than the distance of a musket-shot, and not once did he set foot on the acclivity. His only promenade consisted in going out upon the esplanade and walking first to one corner, then to another of the castle, whence he would gaze aloft into the crags and ravines to detect, if possible, some access, no matter how arduous if only practicable in the slightest degree, to a hiding-place in case of a stampede. To his fellow-refugees he was lavish of his bows and salutations, but chary of his company. Most of the time he conversed with Perpetua and Agnese, as we have mentioned. He continued ventilating his misgivings before them, at the risk of an occasional invective from the former or a rebuke by the latter.

At table, where he sat little and ate less, he would hear the tidings of the terrible invasion as they arrived from one day to the next, passed along from village to village or from mouth to mouth, or conveyed personally by some new fugitive who had originally planned to stay at home and fled only at the eleventh hour without being able to save a single thing or even escape a rib-roasting. Each day there was some new calamity to tell. Professional news-mongers were not lacking to collect all rumors, thresh out all details, and then give the nub of the story to others. There were controversies as to which regiments were more fiendish, and whether the infantry were worse than the cavalry. They affected to call the different captains by name. The exploits of certain divisions were rehearsed, and their halting-places and marching-orders were specified: On such a

day such and such a regiment was billeted in such and such villages, and tomorrow it would descend upon such and such other villages, where, meanwhile, such or such a regiment was playing the de'il and worse.

Above all, they were assiduous in obtaining news and keeping a record of the regiments as they crossed one after another over the bridge at Lecco, because these might be considered as having gone by and left the country for good. Now it is Wallenstein's cavalry that is crossing, and now Marrada's. Then in turn follow the cavalry of Anhalt, of Brandenburg, of Montecuccoli and Ferrari. Then comes Altringer, then Furstenburg, then Colloredo, then the Croatians, then Torquato Conti, then this, that and the other, until in Heaven's good time it was Galasso, who came last. The Venetian flying-squadron finally took its departure, and the whole country to right and left was unencumbered. Already those from the hamlets that were the first to be invaded and the first to be evacuated had left the castle, and each day saw others departing—as, after an autumnal storm, we see the leafy bowers of some great tree deserted by the birds that had flown there for shelter.

Our three friends were, I believe, the last to depart; and that out of deference to Don Abbondio, who feared lest, if they returned too soon, they would find some straggling *lansquenets* still lurking about the neighborhood. It was vain for Perpetua to allege that the longer he delayed the more time he was affording the rascals of the village to invade the house and make off with what was left; when it was question of saving his skin, Don Abbondio always carried the day—unless, indeed, the imminence of the danger put his wits entirely to rout.

On the day fixed for their departure the Un-named had a coach in readiness for them at the Malanotte, with a present of assorted linens stowed away in it for Agnese. Drawing her aside, he also forced her to accept a purse of gold *florins* to repair the damages she might find at home; although she went on insisting, with much tapping of her bosom, that she had some of his former munificence left.

"When thou seest again thy good daughter, poor Lucia," he

said finally—"I am sure she prayeth for me already, since I was such an enemy to her, but still—tell her that I thank her always and trust in God that her prayer will bring blessings to her also."

Nothing would do but that he should accompany his three guests to their carriage. The reader is left to imagine the profuseness of Don Abbondio's humble thanks and of Perpetua's compliments at parting. According to their agreement they made a brief call at the tailor's, without, however, pausing to sit down. They were regaled with a hundred tales of the invasion—the old refrain of robbery and assault, of ruin and defilement. Fortunately, though, no *lansquenets* were seen in the locality.

"Ah! your reverence," quoth the tailor, in handing Don Abbondio back into the carriage, "the story of such a hurly-burly must be told in printed books."

After another stretch of road our travelers began to see with their own eyes what they had so often heard described: the vineyards laid waste, not as at vintage-time, but as if by the united violence of hail and hurricane; vines stripped bare and tossed about in wild confusion; stakes pulled out; the ground trampled, and strewn with chips and foliage and dead branches; trees split and dismembered; hedges breached and gates carried away. In the villages it was a different order of desolation: house-doors cleft in twain, window-panes in tatters, the ground littered with all sorts of rubbish, rags heaped together or strewn along the street. The air was foul, fouler still the stench from the houses. The inhabitants were to be seen ejecting filth, or repairing door-posts, or gathered in groups exchanging grievances. When the carriage came abreast of them, hands were thrust from right and left through the windows soliciting alms.

With such images before their eyes or haunting their minds, and with anticipations of equal havoc greeting them at their return, they reached home; and the event did not belie their apprehensions.

Agnese had her bundles deposited in a corner of the court, which was now the cleanest part of the establishment. She then set herself to sweeping the house and putting in order the few

articles that were left. Summoning a smith and a carpenter, she had them repair the most serious damages; and as she inspected, piece by piece, her present of linen and counted over the bright new coins, "I have fairly landed on my feet," she murmured to herself—"yes, thanks be to God and the Madonna and to that kind nobleman, I can honestly say that I have landed fairly on my feet."

Don Abbondio and Perpetua entered without the help of keys. A stench, which increased with every step, greeted them in the vestibule—an all-pervading poison, a breath of pestilence, that drove them back to the outer air. Holding their hands to their nose, they betook themselves to the kitchen-door. They entered on tiptoe, picking their steps as best they might to avoid the filth with which the floor was covered, and looked about them. Nothing was intact. Every corner exhibited fragments and ruins of what once had been: feathers and quills from Perpetua's chickens, strips of household linen, leaves from Don Abbondio's calendars, sherds of pots and plates—all heaped together or scattered about indiscriminately. On the hearthstone alone were visible the evidences of wholesale looting jumbled together—not unlike the multiplicity of ideas which the artistic writer can suggest rather than express in a single sentence. There was a charred detritus of articles, which proclaimed themselves to have been, one the arm of a chair, another the leg of a table, a third the door of a closet, or a bed-slat, or a stave from the cask whose contents were wont to brace up Don Abbondio at need. The rest was ashes and charcoal; and with the charcoal the spoilers had, by way of indemnity, besmudged the walls with heads of what, by outlandishly drawn birettas, and tonsures and moon-faces, they tried to represent as priests, and were at pains to depict as both horrible and ridiculous—an intention which, to say truth, could not fail of fulfilment at the hands of such artists.

"Hah! the pigs!" exclaimed Perpetua. "Hah! the scoundrels!" exclaimed Don Abbondio; and, so saying, they fled by another door into the garden to gain a breath of air. They made straightway for the fig-tree; but even before reaching it

they saw the earth disturbed and let forth a scream together. On drawing nearer they found, sure enough, no treasure but only a gaping hole. This was the signal for a storm. Don Abbondio began to upbraid Perpetua for not concealing the valuables more effectually. Fancy Perpetua silent under such provocation! The violence of their objurgations having at length spent itself, they returned together each with arm extended backwards and finger pointing towards the open hole, grumbling, to the house. Suffice it to say that they found practically the same state of affairs at every turn. They were at great trouble for I know not how long to get the house cleaned and disinfected, the more so as help was very hard to find at the time; and so they had to camp, as it were, a weary while, getting along better or worse and mending doors, furniture and utensils from day to day with money advanced by Agnese.

Nor did the trouble end here. These disasters proved to be the source of still other bickerings that were extremely annoying. Perpetua, thanks to her keen scent and keen eye, to asking questions and keeping her ear to the ground, had ascertained for certain that some of their household appointments which they believed to have fallen a prey to the soldiers' rapacity or destructiveness, were, instead, installed safe and sound in the houses of neighbors; and she went on pestering her master to assert himself and demand what was his. She could not have struck a more odious note for Don Abbondio's ear; because were not his things, then, in the possession of scoundrels? and were they not the very class of persons he was most anxious to steer clear of?

"But," he would say, "suppose I wish to close my eyes to such things. How often must I repeat that what's done is done? Because my house hath been looted, must I also be put to the rack?"

"'Tis just as I say," Perpetua would reply. "You would let them steal the eyes out of your head. To rob others is a sin; 'tis a sin not to rob your reverence."

"A truce to your garrulity," Don Abbondio would rejoin. "Will you ever hold your tongue?"

Perpetua would hold her tongue, but not immediately, and the least thing served as a pretext to start again. So that the poor man was fain to forego his lamentations, when he found something missing at the very moment he would have needed it most. Because more than once he had been greeted with the retort: "Go look for it at such a one's who hath it, and would not have it so long unless he had to do with a sheep."

Another source of keener apprehension still was the rumor that stray soldiers continued daily to pass, as he had conjectured but too well would happen. Hence he remained in continual suspense lest one, or a whole troop of them, should come knocking at his door, which he had had repaired before anything else in great haste and kept carefully locked. By the grace of Heaven, no one ever came. But these terrors were not yet past when another followed on the heels of them.

Here we must take leave of poor Don Abbondio. It is question now of quite another matter than his private apprehensions, or the troubles of a few little hamlets, or a transitory disaster.

CHAPTER XXXI[1]

THE plague which the board of health had feared the German troops might carry into the Milanese was carried in fact, as is well known; as it is equally well known that it did not stop there, but invaded and depopulated a good part of Italy. Following the thread of our story, we shall pass on now to relate the principal events of the calamity—in the Milanese, be it understood, or rather, almost exclusively in Milan itself; seeing that it is almost exclusively of the city that the records of the period take notice, as happens at almost every period and in every land, for good reasons as well as for very bad ones. Our purpose in entering upon such a relation is, frankly, not only to describe the situation of our characters, but at the same time to make known as well as we can with our limited space and our limited qualifications a page of our country's history more celebrated than read.

[1] [It will not be out of place here to follow the example set by Manzoni himself in Chapter XXII, where he admonishes his readers that he is going to digress from fiction and enter the province of pure history, and informs them where they may take up the thread of the narrative at once, if they do not choose to wait. This chapter and the following are frankly a monograph on the bubonic plague of 1630 in Milan, and the story is resumed with the opening of Chapter XXXIII.

Much has been made of the introduction of this treatise as a serious blemish on an historical romance. Goethe saw the simplest way of eliminating the incongruity, when he advised the German translator to omit the episode. And Manzoni, in a letter to Fauriel of June, 1827, authorizes his French translator to take what liberties he likes, adding: "I felt it to be too long myself, generally speaking; but for us here it is family gossip, and so not without value." The difficulty with omitting it entirely is that it obtains consistency at too great a sacrifice. After reading this description of the plague Lamartine wrote to Manzoni, insisting that he was, in reality, an historian—a pioneer in historical composition—and urging him to follow his evident calling in future. "Leave the historical romance aside, and write us history in a new *genre*. You can do it; you have done it." Carteggio, vol. II, page 351.—TRANSLATOR.]

Of the many contemporary narratives there is not one which of itself suffices to convey a clear and orderly notion of the whole truth, as there is not one which cannot help us to form such a notion. In every one of them, not even excepting Ripamonti's,[2] which surpasses all the others for both the quality and the choice of materials and still more for the power of observation it displays—in every one of them some essential facts are omitted that we find recorded in the others; as in every one material errors occur which we can detect and rectify by the aid of other chronicles or of the few official acts, edited or unedited, that survive. Again, it often happens that in one quarter we stumble upon the causes of something whose effects we found vaguely adumbrated elsewhere. But throughout there reigns the greatest confusion of chronology and classification. Everything is kaleidoscopic, haphazard, without any general design or principle of selection as to details—one of the most obvious and common characteristics, be it said in passing, of the books of that period, and more particularly of those in the vernacular. At least, this was true of Italy. Whether it applies to the rest of Europe the learned can pass verdict, and we can entertain our suspicions.

No subsequent writer has ever undertaken to examine and collate these different authorities with a view to extracting from them the orderly progress of events and constructing a real history of the plague. So the idea of it which is generally entertained must of necessity be very uncertain and a little confused —a vague impression of great evils and great errors (and, in truth, they both existed to a degree that surpasses imagination), an impression compounded more of opinion than of facts, of some sporadic facts divested of their most characteristic details and torn from their chronological setting; that is to say, without any comprehension of cause and effect, sequence or progress.

We have tried, on our part, by examining and collating, with great diligence, if no more, all the published narratives and more than one that are unpublished, as well as many (many in comparison with the rather exiguous total) so-called official

[2] De Peste Quæ fuit Anno 1630, in Five Books, by Joseph Ripamonti, Canon of La Scala, Chronicler of the City of Milan. Malatestas, Milan, 1640.

documents, to produce, not such a work as is desiderated, but more than had yet been achieved. It is not our intention to quote every official act, or even every event which from some aspect is worthy of being preserved. Still less do we pretend to render unnecessary the reading of original documents to such as desire a fuller acquaintance with the facts; we appreciate too well the living, personal and, I may say, incommunicable force that distinguishes works of this character, no matter how indifferently they are conceived and executed. We have attempted only to select and verify the more important and general facts, to arrange them in the real order of their succession, as well as their nature and logic admit, to observe their reciprocal influence, and thus to furnish, for the present need and until some one else shall do better, a brief but conscientious and connected account of the disaster.

Throughout the whole strip of territory, therefore, traversed by the army of invasion, stray corpses were found in the houses and sometimes along the road. Soon afterwards individuals and whole families began to take sick and die in this, that and the other village of some strange virulent disease, whose symptoms were unknown to the greater part of those who lived at the time. There were only a few to whom they were not entirely new—those who could remember the plague that fifty-three years before had likewise ravaged a good part of the peninsula, and particularly the Milanese, where it was known, and is known still, as the plague of St. Charles. Such is the power of love! It can make the memory of one man predominate over all the varied and solemn recollections of a general misfortune, because it inspired in that man sentiments and deeds more memorable than the evils he opposed. It can stamp him on a people's mind as the symbol and epitome of all their afflictions, because through them all he was present as a guide, a helper, an example and a voluntary victim. It can turn a general calamity into a personal triumph for him and name a disaster for him, as though it were a conquest or a discovery.

Lodovico Settala, the physician-in-chief, who had not only been a witness of the former plague but one of its most active,

intrepid and (though he was very young at the time) most successful opponents, and who now kept himself on the alert, his suspicions being aroused, and in touch with various sources of information, reported on October 20 to the board of health that the epidemic had indubitably broken out in Chiuso (a parish on the extremity of the territory of Lecco and adjoining the Province of Bergamo). No action was taken in consequence, as appears from the account of Tadino.[3]

On top of this came similar advices from Lecco and Bellano. The board then took action. But they contented themselves with sending a commissary, who met with a doctor at Como on his way and brought him along to visit the designated localities. They both, "either through ignorance or for some other reason, allowed themselves to be convinced by a stupid old barber of Bellano that this kind of illness was not the plague,"[4] but in certain places the usual result of autumnal miasma, and in others the result of distress and hardships suffered during the German invasion. This is the sort of assurance that was brought back to the board of health, who seem thereupon to have set their hearts at rest.

But, reports of still other fatalities continuing to pour in without intermission from different directions, two delegates were despatched to look into the situation and adopt preventives, the above-mentioned Tadino and an auditor of the board. When they arrived on the scene, the evil had attained such proportions that the proofs obtruded themselves without any search. They scoured the territory of Lecco, the Valsassina, the shores of Lake Como, and the districts called Mount Brianza and Gera-on-Adda. Everywhere they came across villages with the entrances fenced across, others almost deserted and their inhabitants camping out in the fields or scattered far and wide, "and looking," observes Tadino, "like so many wild creatures, one carrying mint, one rue, another rosemary, and still others vials of vinegar." They inquired into the number of deaths; it was appalling. They visited the sick and the dead; everywhere they found the ugly

[3] Page 24.
[4] Ibid.

and fearful marks of pestilence. They immediately communicated their sinister news by letter to the board of health, which upon their receipt of the document, which was on October 30, "prepared," says the same Tadino, "to proclaim quarantine, in order to exclude from the city those bound from villages where the plague had shown itself, issuing preliminary orders to the tax-gatherers while the decree was being compiled."

Meanwhile the delegates in hot haste took what measures seemed to them best, and returned with the melancholy conviction that all precautions were unavailing either to remedy or to check an evil which had already become so chronic and widespread.

They arrived on November 14 and presented both an oral and a written report to the board of health. The latter commissioned them to go to the governor and lay the state of affairs before him. They went, and this is what they reported back: that the governor regretted exceedingly to hear such tidings, and showed himself deeply touched; but that the interests of war were still more pressing—*sed belli graviores esse curas*. Thus Ripamonti, who had made his own of the registers of the board of health and conferred with Tadino, one of those specially entrusted with this mission—the second, if the reader will remember, with the same object and the same issue. Two or three days later the governor issued a proclamation prescribing public festivities in honor of the birth of Prince Charles, first-born of King Philip IV, without suspecting or taking into account the danger of such a gathering under existing circumstances—all as in ordinary times, just as if no one had spoken to him.

This official, as has already been said, was Ambrogio Spinola, sent to retrieve the advantages lost in the war, to rectify the mistakes of Don Gonzalo, and, incidentally, to govern. We may here recall, also incidentally, that he died a few months later during that same war whose interests he had so much at heart—died, not of wounds received on the battlefield, but in bed of worry and chagrin over reprimands, injustices and disappointments of every kind inflicted by those whom he served. History has bewailed his lot and censured the ingratitude of his superiors.

It has been assiduous in describing his military and political achievements and in praising his foresight, his industry and his constancy. It might also inquire what use he made of all these qualities when the plague was threatening to invade a population entrusted to his care, or rather, we might say, to his mercy.

But without minimizing his blame, what makes his conduct less surprising and gives rise to a counter-surprise that is more intense, is the conduct of the population itself—such part of it, that is, as being still immune from contagion, had so much reason to fear it. Upon receiving such news from the affected villages,—villages forming a kind of semicircle at some points not more than eighteen or twenty miles from the city,—who would not think that it would have created general excitement, a desire for some precautions good or bad, at the very least a sterile disquietude? Yet, if there is one point upon which the records of the time are in agreement, it is that no such thing happened. The dearth of the preceding year, the atrocities of the army and the mental sufferings incidental to the occupation, seemed more than enough to account for the reported mortality; and, did one hint at the existence of danger or allude to the topic of plague, whether it were on the street-corner, in the market or at the fireside, he was greeted with jeers of incredulity and angry contempt. The same unbelief, or rather, the same blindness and obstinacy, prevailed in the senate, in the council of decurions, and in every rank of the magistracy.

I find that no sooner had Cardinal Federigo learned of the first cases of contagious disease than he enjoined all parish priests by a pastoral letter, among other prescriptions, to insist repeatedly upon the importance and the strict obligation of their congregations making known such attacks and handing over infected or suspicious belongings to the authorities[5]—another instance of his praiseworthy singularity.

The board of health asked and besought co-operation, but they obtained little or no response. Nay, their own solicitude was far from matching the urgency of the needs. It was, as

[5] Vita di Federigo Borromeo, compiled by Francesco Rivola. Milan, 1666, page 582.

Tadino repeatedly affirms and as appears still more plainly from the whole context of his narrative, the two physicians among their number who, themselves convinced of the gravity and imminence of the danger, stimulated that body to rouse the public.

We have already seen how remiss they were about bestirring, or even informing, themselves at the first signal of the plague. We have now to record another instance of their tardiness which is no less portentous, if, indeed, it was not imposed on them by the obstructionism of their superiors. The decree in regard to quarantine, which was resolved on October 30, was not drawn up until the twenty-third of the following month, nor published until the twenty-ninth. The plague had, meanwhile, entered Milan.

Both Tadino and Ripamonti are careful to note the name of him who introduced it, as well as other details concerning his person and the circumstance to which he owes his celebrity. In fact, there is a natural curiosity, in tracing the beginnings of great disasters of this kind where the victims, far from being distinguishable by name, can hardly be approximated in thousands, to know the name of the first few sufferers as far as they could be ascertained and preserved. This species of distinction—this priority in extermination—seems to dignify them, and particulars otherwise indifferent relating to them, with a tragic importance deserving special commemoration.

Both historians depose that it was an Italian soldier in the service of Spain; as to the rest, they are not in agreement, even as to the name. According to Tadino it was one Pietro Antonio Lovato, garrisoned in the territory of Lecco. According to Ripamonti it was a certain Pier Paolo Locati, from the garrison of Chiavenna. They differ likewise as to the date of his entering Milan. The former places it on October 22, the latter on the same date of the month following. Neither date can be accepted. They both conflict with other information that is much better verified. And yet Ripamonti, who wrote by order of the general council of decurions, must have had many means at his command of obtaining the necessary data; and Tadino, by reason of his

occupation, could better than any one else ascertain a fact of this nature. From a comparison of still other dates, which, as has been remarked, appear better authenticated, it develops that it was prior to the promulgation of the quarantine ordinance; and, were the point of consequence, it could be proved, or very nearly proved, to have been early in November. But surely the reader will dispense us from the task.

Be the date what it may, the doomed and doomful foot-soldier did enter, carrying a great bundle of clothes which he had either bought or stolen from the German military. He put up at the house of some relatives in the avenue leading to the East Gate hard by the Capuchins. Hardly had he arrived when he fell sick. He was taken to the hospital, where a boil, breaking out in one of his arm-pits, put the attendant upon suspecting the truth. The fourth day he died.

The board of health isolated his family and quarantined them in their home. His clothing and the bed in which he had lain at the hospital were burned. Two of the attendants who had had him in charge and a good friar who had assisted him were stricken down within a few days and died, all three of the plague. The suspicion which had arisen in the hospital from the very outset about the real nature of the malady and the precautions taken in consequence, prevented the contagion from spreading farther within its precincts.

But the soldier had dropped a seed outside which was not long in germinating. The first to be affected was the master of the house in which he had lodged, a certain Carlo Colonna, a lute-player. Then, by order of the board of health, all the inmates of the house were brought to the *lazaretto,* where the greater number took sick. Some of them died in a brief space of a manifestly contagious malady.

In the city at large the germs of the disease, which had already been communicated by these unfortunates or by their clothing, or by furniture surreptitiously abstracted by relatives, lodgers or domestics from the flames or the inspection prescribed by law, and still more, the germs that subsequently were introduced on account of the inadequacy of the edicts and the carelessness of

functionaries, as well as by the adroitness of travelers, went on incubating and spreading slowly during all the rest of that year and the first months of the following year, 1630.

From time to time, now in this, now in that other section of the city, some one would be attacked and die; but the very infrequency of such cases diverted suspicion from the truth and strengthened the public still more in their stupid and fatal conviction that there was no plague and never had been for a single instant. Many physicians, too, echoing the voice of the people (could it have been called the voice of God even in this instance?) derided the sinister prognostications, the ominous warnings of the few, and always had at the end of their tongue the name of one of the common ailments with which to designate every case of the plague they were called on to attend, no matter what the symptoms or the indications.

The report of such instances to the board of health, even when it was made, was made tardily for the most part and ambiguously. The fear of segregation and of the *lazaretto* quickened every wit. The sick were not reported, undertakers and their overseers were bribed. Even subaltern officials of the board of health itself, delegated to examine the corpses, issued false attestations for a price.

Since, however, the board of health continued, every time it discovered a case, to burn the victim's things, isolate houses and send families to the *lazaretto,* it is easy to infer the public discontent that raged against them, "on the part," says Tadino, "of the nobility, the shopkeepers and the lower classes," convinced as all were that these were nothing but groundless and senseless vexations. The chief odium fell upon the two doctors, the aforesaid Tadino and Senator Settala, son of the physician-in-chief. To such lengths did this feeling go that thenceforward they could not cross the public squares without being assailed by hard words, when it was not something yet harder. For some months the situation of these two men was certainly singular and deserving of record. They saw a horrible scourge steadily advancing and exerted themselves in every way to avert it, while, instead of the help and moral support they sought, they met

only with interference, became targets for abuse and passed for enemies of their country—*"pro patriæ hostibus,"* says Ripamonti.

A share of this odium also fell to such of their confrères as, convinced like them of the reality of the contagion, suggested precautions and sought to communicate their painful certainty to every one else. The more considerate taxed them with credulity and obstinacy; to all the rest their zeal was patent imposture, an intrigue to make capital of the public terror.

The physician-in-chief, Lodovico Settala, then lacking but little of being an octogenarian, having been professor of medicine at the University of Pavia, then of moral philosophy at Milan, the author of many works in high repute with his contemporaries and celebrated as well for the offers he had received of chairs in still other universities—Ingolstadt, Pisa, Bologna and Padua—as for his declinature of these honors, was assuredly one of the most authoritative scholars of his time. To his reputation for science was joined the prestige of his virtues, and admiration was qualified by love, thanks to his great charity in tending and succoring the poor. And—a circumstance which tempers our feeling of respect today and tinges it with regret, but which then tended to strengthen esteem and render it more general—the good old man shared in the most widespread and disastrous prejudices of his contemporaries; he was more advanced than they without ceasing to be one of them—which would be a crime, negativing, as it often does, reputations otherwise solidly established. Still the great ascendancy he enjoyed not only did not avail in this instance to defeat the opinion of those whom poets refer to as the *"profanum vulgus"* and demagogues as the "sovereign people," but did not protect him from the animosity and insults of that section of them who pass readily from opinion to demonstrations and deeds.

One day, as he was making the rounds of his patients, a crowd began to gather about his litter, yelling out that he was the head of the croakers, throwing the city into a panic with that lofty air and that solemn old beard of his, all to make work for the doctors. The concourse and the hubbub continued to increase, when his bearers, seeing the evil plight that was threatening,

bore their master to the shelter of a friend's house that fortunately stood near by. This betided him for seeing clearly with his eyes, saying what was so and trying to preserve many thousands from impending plague. Whereas, when he once cooperated, by a deplorable opinion he rendered in consultation, in sending a poor unfortunate woman to torture and the stake as a witch, because her master felt strange gripings in his stomach and a former master had become deeply infatuated with her,[6] he, no doubt, won from the public fresh laurels for his wisdom and, what is intolerable to think of, new titles to his country's gratitude.

But towards the end of the month of March, first in the vicinity of the East Gate and later on in every quarter of the city, there was an increased outbreak of sickness and deaths with strange accompaniments of spasm, palpitation of the heart, coma, and delirium, together with the well-known fatal tokens of bruises and boils. Death, for the most part, came quickly and was violent in character. Not unfrequently also it was sudden, no sign of sickness having preceded it. The physicians who had stood out against the idea of epidemic, being loath to admit what they had before ridiculed, but compelled to apply some generic name to the new malady, now become too common and too manifest to go nameless, resorted to the appellation of malignant, or pestilent, fever—a miserable compromise, nay, mere paltering, fraught besides with much mischief; because, while ostensibly recognizing the truth, it ended in obscuring what it was of the first importance to get people to believe and to see: that the disease was communicated by contact.

The magistrates, like one awakening from profound sleep, began at length to give a little more heed to the warnings and proposals of the board of health, to enforce their ordinances and give effect to the segregation and quarantine regulations of that body. They constantly solicited funds to meet the daily increasing expenses of the *lazaretto* and other branches of service, beseeching the decurions to make the necessary advances while the question was being settled (it never was settled, I be-

[6] Storia di Milano, by Count Pietro Verri. Milan, 1825, vol. IV, page 155.

lieve, except by events) whether such expenditures were chargeable to the city or to the royal exchequer. Similar importunities were reaching the decurions from the high-chancellor, at the instances of the governor, who had gone to besiege anew the much-beleaguered Casale; and, at the same time, the senate was insistent that the same decurions look to the victualling of the city (against the discontinuance of commerce with other sections, should the epidemic unfortunately be prolonged), as well as hit on some plan of keeping that considerable part of the population who were without employment. The decurions tried to raise money by loans and taxes. Part of what they realized went to the board of health, part to the poor, part to the purchase of grain. They thus met a modicum of the demands on them. But the real hardships had not yet arrived.

In the *lazaretto,* whose population, in spite of daily decimation, went on daily increasing, it was another arduous task to stabilize service and discipline, to preserve the specified segregations—in a word, to maintain, or rather to establish, the form of government ordained by the board of health; since from the very beginning everything was confusion owing to the lawlessness of many inmates and the carelessness and connivance of the attendants. The members of the board and the decurions, being at their wits' ends, bethought themselves of applying to the Capuchins. They accordingly petitioned the commissary of the province, who was functioning in the room of the provincial, recently deceased, to give them men fit to govern such a desolate kingdom. The commissary offered them as chief executive, Father Felice Casati, a religious of mature years, who enjoyed a high reputation for charity, energy and mildness combined with strength of character—a reputation which subsequent events showed to be well merited. His companion and lieutenant was to be a certain Father Michele Pozzobonelli, who was still young but grave and austere, in mind as well as demeanor. They were accepted joyfully, and entered the *lazaretto,* March 30. The president of the board of health led them through as if to take formal possession, and, assembling attendants and

employees of every rank, he proclaimed Father Felice president of the place with full and sovereign authority.

Gradually, as the miserable assemblage went on swelling, other Capuchins joined the service and supplied the institution at once with superintendents, confessors, administrators, infirmarians, cooks, storekeepers, launderers, and whatever else occasion demanded. Father Felice, always busy and always solicitous, was on his feet day and night, patrolling the arcade, the rooms, the vast central space, sometimes bearing his truncheon of office and sometimes armed with no other badge of distinction than his hair-shirt. He was a constant source of encouragement and orderliness, quelling disturbance, redressing grievances, threatening and punishing, reprehending and comforting, drying the tears of the afflicted or mingling his own with them. He took the disease early, was cured, and resumed his cares with renewed vitality. The greater number of his brethren forfeited their lives, and all cheerfully.

Such a dictatorship was surely a strange expedient—strange as the times and the calamity that called it forth. Taking the fact by itself, we might consider it an argument and an illustration of the rudeness and loose organization of the civil society, that those on whom the responsibility officially rested could devise nothing more seasonable than such a resignation of their powers, nor find an agency more fitted to receive them than a body of men whose constitution was so alien to such occupations. But it is, at the same time, a not contemptible illustration of the strength and versatility which charity can inspire at any juncture, when we see men bearing so creditably a burden like this. And it was splendid that they should have accepted the post for no other reason than that none wanted it, with no other aim than to serve and with no other hope in this world than to die a death more enviable than envied; as it was likewise splendid that the post was offered to them only because it was difficult and dangerous, and because they were supposed to possess the energy and cool-headedness that were so necessary and so rare in the circumstances.

And therefore the work and the courage of these friars deserve

to be signalized in a spirit of admiration, of tenderness, and of that racial gratitude which is due to great services rendered by man to man, and the more due to such as do not contemplate it as a recompense. "For of a certainty," says Tadino, "had these fathers not been available, the whole city would have been annihilated; because it is miraculous how much these fathers accomplished in a brief space of time for the public weal, and how many thousands of poor their industry and prudence supported in the *lazaretto* without any assistance at all or but a very little from the city." The number of persons harbored in this one place during the seven months that Father Felice was in charge approximated fifty thousand, according to the estimate of Ripamonti, who very justly observes that he would not need to change a jot of what he had written if, instead of describing the afflictions of a city, he had been required to rehearse the praises of this worthy Capuchin.

Gradually even the obstinacy with which the populace had denied the existence of a plague abated and disappeared, as the disease went on spreading—always by means of contact and association. The disillusionment became more pronounced when the evil, after having been confined for a time to the poorer classes, began to attack persons of greater prominence. The case of Settala, the physician-in-chief, was the one that attracted most attention at the time and calls for special mention even now. Did his fellow-citizens at last concede that the good old man was right? Heaven alone knows. What we do know is that he contracted the illness, together with his wife, his two sons and seven members of the household. He and one son survived; the rest died. "Such fatalities," says Tadino, "happening to noble families within the city itself, disposed both gentle and simple to reflect, and skeptical doctors and the ignorant, presumptuous rabble began equally to purse the lips, set the jaw and arch the eyebrows."

But the recriminations and retaliations in which obstinacy at times takes refuge when it is at length convinced are such as to make us wish that it had held out firmly to the bitter end against all reason and evidence; and this was precisely one of those times.

Those who had so long and so doggedly pooh-poohed the idea that disease in embryo lurked near by and might be transmitted by natural instrumentalities and work havoc, being now unable to dispute the fact of such transmission any longer and unwilling to attribute it to these obvious instrumentalities (which would have been the confession at once of great fallibility and of great blameworthiness), were all the more inclined to discover some other instrumentality at work and to accept the first theory that offered.

Unfortunately one was furnished ready-made by the commonly received ideas and traditions, then prevalent not alone in Italy but throughout Europe, of the arts of venifice, of black magic and of conspiracies to disseminate plague by means of infectious poisons and sorcery. Identical or similar practices had been assumed and believed to exist at other periods, and specifically at the time of the last plague fifty years further back. This general presumption was invested with additional plausibility by a fact which had happened the year before. The governor then received a despatch, countersigned by King Philip IV, warning him to be on the lookout for four Frenchmen, suspected of disseminating poisonous and disease-bearing ointments, who had escaped from Madrid. The governor had communicated the despatch to the senate and the board of health, nor was any further heed apparently paid to the matter at that time. But, the plague breaking out and coming into recognition in the meantime, the memory of the royal admonition may have confirmed an already gathering suspicion of felonious treachery at the bottom of recent developments, or may even have given rise to the suspicion originally.

But two incidents, one occasioned by blind, unreasoning fear, the other by some incomprehensible perversity, were the factors which changed this vague surmise of a possible felony into a well-defined suspicion, and in some minds a certainty, of positive felony and a very actual conspiracy against the public weal. Certain persons, who happened to be in the cathedral on the evening of May 17, fancied they saw men engaged in smearing some ointment over a scaffolding that served as a partition be-

tween the two sexes. Responding to a summons from the frightened witnesses, the president of the board of health hastened to the scene with four subalterns of his department. They inspected the scaffolding, the benches and the holy-water stoups without finding any evidence of the alleged crime, but out of tenderness for other people's imaginations, and *more to abound in caution than for any real necessity,* they judged a scrubbing to be all that was required.

That did not prevent the victims of the ignorant suspicion of poisoning from lugging the scaffolding and a number of benches out into the street during the night. The sight of all this lumber piled up in the square inspired a great panic in the populace, for whom a fact so easily resolves itself into an argument. It forthwith became matter of general report and credence that not only the benches and walls of the cathedral but even the bell-ropes had been anointed. Nor was it said only at the time. All the chronicles (some of them written by contemporaries many years after the event) which mention the occurrence, speak of it in terms of equal assurance, and the true history of the episode would be left to conjecture, were it not revealed in a letter from the board of health to the governor which is still preserved in the archives of San Fedele. It is this document which we have laid under contribution and from which we have extracted the words printed in italics.

The next morning a still stranger and more significant spectacle met the gaze of the citizens and furnished fresh matter for speculation. Doors and house-fronts all over the town were daubed with long streaks of some dirty-yellow filth, as if it had been applied with a sponge. Whether it was the act of some insane joker who delighted in making the consternation louder and more general, or the result of a more criminal intention still, aiming at increasing the public confusion, or from whatever motive it proceeded, the fact itself is so well attested that it would be less reasonable to attribute it to the hallucination of the many than to the mischievousness of a few; particularly since it was not the first nor the last time that such a thing happened. Ripamonti, who frequently ridicules, and more frequently deplores,

the public infatuation in this matter of anointings, avers that in this instance he saw the smears and describes them in detail.[7]

In the letter we have before cited the members of the board of health relate the matter in the same terms used by Ripamonti. They speak of visiting the scene, of making experiments on dogs with the matter employed in the defilement and of the absence of any evil consequences. They add that, in their judgment, *this temerity, such as it hath been set forth, proceeded rather from insolence than from any wicked intent:* a reflection which even today vindicates their calmness of mind, enabling them thus not to see what did not exist. Other contemporary records in relating the occurrence likewise mention that it was ascribed by many at the time to jocularity or eccentricity. No one is instanced as denying it, as such a denial would be instanced, were it only to show how crack-brained a man could be. I have thought it not amiss thus to bring together and preserve these details of a celebrated superstition, some of which were but little known, and some entirely forgotten; because the most interesting, as well as the most useful, lesson to be learned from error, especially endemic error, appears to me to consist in following its successive stages and in ascertaining the guise under which it gained admittance into people's minds and the sophistries by which it finally established its sovereignty over reason.

The city, which had been nervous before, now went frantic. Householders went about scorching the bedaubed areas with burning straw. Passers-by stopped and looked on, appalled, horror-struck. Strangers, become liable to suspicion by the very fact of their being strangers and being easily recognizable by their garb, were arrested on the street by civilians and brought before magistrates. Interrogatories were instituted and examinations made of captives, captors and witnesses. No one was found guilty; people's minds were still capable of hesitating, of examining evidence, of comprehending the obvious. The

[7] ". . . et nos quoque ivimus visere. Maculæ erant sparsim inæqualiterque manantes, veluti si quis haustam spongia saniem adspersisset, impressissetve parieti: et ianuae passim, ostiaque aedium eadem adspergine contaminata cernebantur." page 75.

board of health issued a proclamation, promising immunity and a reward to whosoever informed against the author or authors of the transaction. *Deeming it impolitic in any event,* they recite in the before-mentioned letter (which bears the date of May 21, but which was evidently written on the 19th, the date borne by the printed proclamation) *that such a misdemeanor should by any means go unpunished, especially in these times of danger and public alarm, we have, for the greater comfort and tranquillity of the people and to extort information on the subject, this day issued a proclamation,* etc. But there is no hint, no clear hint at any rate, in the proclamation itself of the reasonable and reassuring conjecture which they submitted to the governor—an omission which denotes at once the fury of the popular prejudice and the pliancy of the official character, which was more than commonly reprehensible because it was fraught with more than common possibilities of mischief.

While officialdom was thus delving for the truth, the man on the street, as often happens, was in full possession of it. Of the faction who accepted the hypothesis of anointings, some maintained that it was a revenge engineered by Don Gonzalo Fernandez de Cordova for the insults inflicted on him while retiring, some claimed that it was a scheme of Cardinal Richelieu to depopulate Milan and seize it without a struggle, while still others, for reasons which still remain apocryphal, would have the culprit to be the Count of Collato, Wallenstein, or even this, that or the other nobleman of Milan itself. There were not wanting supporters of the view already alluded to, that the whole affair was nothing but a wanton joke which was attributable to students, nobles or officials to whom the siege of Casale was a cause of annoyance. As time wore on and signs of the expected aftermath of sudden and general disease and death failed to develop, this first paroxysm of fright gradually abated and the occurrence fell, or seemed to fall, into oblivion.

There never ceased to be, all this while, a certain number of persons who were still unconvinced of the existence of a plague. And because, as well in the *lazaretto* as in the city at large, a certain number of victims recovered, "it was said" (the final

arguments of a forlorn view checkmated by evidence are always curious)—"it was said by the generality and by many doctors who still clung to their prepossessions that it was not true pestilence, else all would have perished."[8]

To banish all doubt the board of health resorted to an expedient proportioned to the needs which elicited it, a spectacular object-lesson which the conditions were desperate enough to demand and at the same time to supply. During the festivities of Pentecost there was one day when it was the custom of the townspeople to flock to the Cemetery of St. Gregory without the East Gate to pray for the victims of the former epidemic who were buried there, and, profiting by the occasion, to combine diversion and display with devotion and deck themselves out in holiday attire. On that day the deaths from the plague included one entire family. At the very height of the celebration, through the press of coaches and horsemen and pedestrians, the corpses of this ill-fated family were by order of the board of health loaded on a cart and conveyed to the cemetery in question stark naked, that all might see the manifest signs of pestilence on their bodies. An exclamation of repugnance and terror greeted the ghastly display. A prolonged murmur swelled like an ever-widening ripple ahead of the cart's advance, and another marked the area of horror which it constantly left in its wake. The plague was believed in more firmly; but anyhow it acquired credence of itself, and this same gathering served not a little to give impetus to its spread.

The developments, therefore, might be scanned thus: At the start no question of a plague, absolutely none—preposterous. The very word is tabooed. Then, pestilent fevers; with an oblique implication of the idea of plague introduced by the adjective. Then a simulated plague. The plague, if you will, but with qualifications; that is, not true plague, but something for which another name is lacking. Finally, plague without any doubt or quibble. But straightway another idea, that of poisoning and sorcery, is tacked on, which confuses and neutralizes the

[8] Tadino, page 93.

plain meaning of the word itself, which can now no longer be suppressed.

It is not necessary to be deeply versed in the history of ideas and words, I believe, to see in this a parallel with the course that many others have followed. Heaven be praised that there are not many of the same sinister nature and importance, or which acquire evidence at such a cost, or are attended with such tragic accompaniments! But be the matters of great moment or small, this long and tortuous progress of truth might be greatly facilitated by adopting the method so long proposed of observing, listening, comparing and thinking before speaking.

But this simple, uncomplicated device of talking is so much easier than going through all these other mental processes collectively, that even we (we men in general, I mean) are to be somewhat commiserated.

Chapter XXXII

The task of meeting the painful requirements of the situation becoming daily more difficult, the council of decurions had determined on May 4 to apply to the governor for aid. Pursuant to this resolution two of their number were sent on May 22 to his field-headquarters to represent to him the distress and destitution of the city: the enormous expenditures, the empty treasury, the future revenues mortgaged, the current taxes unpaid as a result of the widespread misery, brought on by a variety of causes in general and the ravages of war in particular. He was reminded that, by virtue of law and uninterrupted custom and of a special decree of Charles V, the expenses of the plague were to be borne by the royal exchequer. In 1576 the Marquis d'Ayamonte, the governor at the time, had not only suspended all imperial exactions, but had granted the city a subsidy of forty thousand *florins* from the revenues of the crown. They prayed, finally, for four concessions: that all exactions be suspended, as before; that the crown make a grant of money; that the governor acquaint his majesty with the misery endured by both the city and the province; and that after all the scathe they had caused in the past the country be dispensed from garrisoning any further troops.

The governor in reply wrote a letter of sympathy and exhortation. He was sorry that he could not be present in the city to bend all his efforts towards its relief, but he hoped that the zeal of their reverend body would supply every deficiency, and that these were times in which to spend without stint and to strain all their resourcefulness. As regarded their petitions, *proueeré en el mejor modo que el tiempo y necesidades presentes permittieren.*[1] And underneath it all a scrawl standing for Ambrogio Spinola, his calligraphy being about as indefinite as

[1] I shall give them such consideration as the time and the present needs permit.

his promises. Ferrer, his high-chancellor, wrote him that this epistle was read by the decurions, *con gran deconsuelo*.[2] There was some further manœuvering back and forth, a pragmatic interchange of questions and answers, but no trace that I can find of coming to a more definite decision.

A little later, at the very height of the plague, the governor by letters-patent transferred his authority to the same Ferrer, having, as he wrote, to give his own attention to the war. Which war, be it remarked incidentally, after having sacrificed a million lives (exclusive of soldiers), which is a very conservative estimate of the plague's toll in Lombardy, Venetia, Piedmont, Tuscany and a part of Romagna; after having laid waste, in the manner that has been described, the places it traversed, to say nothing of the havoc wrought in the fighting zone itself; after the atrocities perpetrated at the overthrow and sack on Mantua, at length ended by recognizing the Duke of Nevers, to prevent whose accession to Mantua the war had originally been undertaken. It must be stated, however, that he was obliged to grant to the Duke of Savoy a slice of Montferrat of the value of fifteen thousand crowns annually, and to Ferrante, Duke of Guastalla, other domains of the value of six thousand crowns annually. There was also a separate and more secret pact by which the Duke of Savoy ceded Pinerolo to France—a treaty fulfilled some time later on under the guise of other considerations and amid wholesale chicanery.

Together with this resolution, the decurions had taken another, that of requesting the cardinal archbishop to institute a solemn procession in which the body of St. Charles should be borne through the city. The prelate refused for many reasons. He was displeased with this pinning their faith to a purely arbitrary test, and feared that, if it miscarried, as he apprehended it would, faith would turn into scandal.[3] He feared also that, *if so be*

[2] With great disappointment.

[3] Memoria delle Cose Notabili Successe in Milano intorno al Mal Contagioso l'Anno 1630, collected by D. Pio la Croce. Milan, 1730. This is evidently an excerpt from the unpublished work of some contemporary writer—if, indeed, it is any more than a mere editing rather than a new compilation.

there were the supposed anointers, such a procession would furnish an occasion too well suited to their criminal designs; *and if there were not,* the assemblage of so many people could not but spread the contagion more widely; *a danger that was much more real.*[4] The suspicion of anointings, we should observe, after being lulled to sleep, had in the meantime broken out anew with increased prevalence and fury.

People had again seen, or imagined they had seen, traces of the anointers' handiwork on the walls and portals of public buildings and on the doors and door-knockers of private residences. The news of the discovery flew from mouth to mouth, and, as always happens when minds are preoccupied, hearing produced the effect of seeing. Besides being preoccupied, people's minds in this instance were constantly growing more embittered by the presence of misfortune and more exasperated by the persistence of danger, and they embraced such a belief the more readily, that anger always seeks to inflict punishment, and, as a man of genius[5] astutely observes in this very connection, prefers to attribute its ills to human perversity, whose injuries it can retaliate, than to a cause which permits no other attitude than one of resignation.

A deadly poison, subtle in its operation and instantaneous in its effects, was a description that more than sufficed to explain the violence, as well as all the more obscure and exceptional characteristics of the disease. It was said to be concocted of toads and snakes, of the sputum and excrement of plague-stricken victims and of all that wild and distorted imaginations could find most loathsome and vile. The poisoners' art was supplemented by the practice of sorcery, which explained every anomaly, silenced every objection, solved every difficulty. If the results were not at once evident after that first impudent tentative, the reason was now obvious—it was an abortive attempt by novices. Now the science had been perfected and the de-

[4] "Si unguenta scelerata et unctores in urbe essent. . . . Si non essent . . . . Certiusque adeo malum." Ripamonti, page 185.

[5] P. Verri. Osservazioni sulla Tortura: Scrittori Italiani d'Economia Politica, Parte Moderna. vol. 17, page 203.

termination of the practitioners had grown fiercer in their hellish purpose. Had any one from henceforth persisted in ascribing the episode to a joke or in denying the existence of a plot, he would have been put down as a blind, obstinate reactionary, even if he did not incur the suspicion of diverting the public attention from the truth for interested reasons, or of being an accomplice, or even an anointer—a word that soon acquired a familiar, a solemn, a fearful sound. Given such a firm conviction that anointers were in existence, their discovery was almost inevitable. Every eye was on the lookout, every action was liable to suspicion. Suspicion easily passed into certainty and certainty into blind, unreasoning fury.

Two instances of this are adduced by Ripamonti, who serves notice that they have not been singled out as any more atrocious than what occurred daily, but because the witnesses for both are only too unexceptionable.

One day in the Church of St. Anthony, on the occasion of some solemnity or other, an old man of more than eighty, after kneeling for a while in prayer, went to sit down; and, before doing so, dusted off the bench with his cloak. "He is anointing the benches!" cried out in chorus some women who had seen his action from their place near by. The worshippers who were in church (in church, mark you!) pounced upon the old grandsire, and, seizing him by the hair, grey and all though it was, they loaded him with blows and kicks. Pushed by those behind and pulled by those before, he was ejected from the church; and, if they did not make an end of him at once, it was only that they might drag him, more dead than alive, to prison and court and thence to torture. "I saw him as they were dragging him along in this fashion," writes Ripamonti, "and never heard of him thereafter, but I believe that he could not well have survived more than a few minutes."

The other case (it occurred the following day) was not less curious, though not equally fatal. Three young Frenchmen, one a writer, one a painter and the other an artisan, having come to Italy in company to see the land, study its antiquities and seek a livelihood, had approached close to the external wall of

the cathedral and stood gazing at it attentively. A passer-by saw them and stopped. He beckoned to another pedestrian, then to others, and soon a staring group was formed about the trio, whose garb, style of wearing the hair and traveling-scrips announced them to be foreigners and, what was still worse, Frenchmen. As if to ascertain if it were marble, they reached forth a hand to touch the building. That was enough. The crowd fell upon them, maltreated them shamefully, and beat them to prison. By good luck the prefecture of police is not far from the cathedral, and by still better luck they were found not guilty and dismissed.

Nor were such occurrences confined to the city; the popular frenzy was as widespread as the contagion itself. The wayfarer whom peasants found traveling off the beaten road or who loitered to look about him or threw himself down by the wayside to rest, the stranger who betrayed something unusual or suspicious in his features or his dress, was an anointer. At the first alarm that was raised, even at the cry of a child, bells were tolled and the peasants flocked to the scene. The unfortunate wretch was stoned, or, if taken, was led to prison by a raging mob. So Ripamonti himself deposes. Prison was, at least for a spell, a haven of safety.

Notwithstanding the wise Federigo's refusal, the decurions kept on pressing for the celebration, seconded noisily by the general suffrage. He resisted for some time further and sought to dissuade his suitors by argument; what the wit of one man could urge against the pressure of the times and the insistence of the multitude. In the existing state of opinion, with the idea of danger confused and controverted as it was and far from possessing the evidence with which it has come down to us, it is not difficult to understand how the good reasons he adduced might be outweighed by the bad reasoning of others even in his own mind. Whether a modicum of weakness also entered into the compliance which he finally yielded to his opponents or whether it did not, is one of the mysteries of the human heart. Certainly, if the case ever happens where error appears to be wholly on the side of the intellect and conscience is unimpeach-

able, it would appear to be so in the instance of those rare characters (and his was of the number) who have resolutely obeyed principle throughout their lives and consistently neglected temporal considerations of every sort. So he yielded at length to redoubled importunities and agreed to the procession. He likewise acceded to the general desire to have the relics of St. Charles exposed on the high altar of the cathedral for the eight days following.

I do not find that the board of health or any one else offered any remonstrance or objection. Only, the board ordained certain precautions which, without averting any part of the danger, indicated the fear they entertained of it. They prescribed stricter regulations to govern the entrance of travelers into the city, and, to guarantee their execution, had the gates kept closed. To exclude infected and suspected persons from the assemblage, they likewise had the doors of quarantined houses nailed up. The number of such houses, if we may take the simple assertion of a sole writer, but a contemporary, as sufficient evidence, amounted to about five hundred.[6]

Three days were devoted to preparations. At dawn on the eleventh of June, which was the day fixed, the procession left the cathedral. First came a long line of people—women for the most part, their faces swathed in voluminous veils, many of them barefooted and clothed in sackcloth. Next came the guilds, each preceded by its banner, and the confraternities in their habits of various cut and color, then the friars, and after them the secular clergy, each vested in the insignia of his rank and bearing a taper or a great candle in his hand. In the very middle, where the lights twinkled thickest and the singing reached its fullest diapason, underneath a rich canopy, advanced the reliquary, borne by successive relays of four canons gorgeously arrayed. The venerable form of the saint, clothed in splendid pontificals and with the mitre on its head, was visible through the glass sides. In the decayed and mutilated lineaments could still be traced some vestige of the features such as pictures made

[6] Allegiamento dello Stato di Milano, etc., by C. G. Cavatio della Somaglia. Milan, 1653, page 482.

them known to younger generations and such as some still remembered to have seen and revered them in life.

Behind the remains of the dead pastor (says Ripamonti, on whom principally we draw for our description), and next to him, as in merit, in blood and in dignity, so now in physical proximity, followed Cardinal Federigo. Then came the rest of the clergy, then the city magistrates in their most solemn robes of office, and then the nobility, some of them clothed gorgeously as for some great religious service, others in token of penance wearing mourning costume or else barefooted and enveloped in their cloaks with the hoods drawn down over their faces. A mixed assemblage brought up the rear.

The street was gaily decorated throughout its whole length. The wealthy had brought out their most precious furnishings. The dwellings of the poor were ornamented by their more affluent neighbors or at the public expense. Leafy boughs were here and there interspersed with tapestry or usurped its place. Pictures, inscriptions and escutcheons hung everywhere. On the window-sills were displayed vases, antiques and diverse bric-à-brac. Lights blazed on all sides. From many of the windows quarantined victims watched the procession and followed it with their prayers. The rest of the city's streets were silent and deserted, save for these wistful figures at the windows, straining their ears to catch stray echoes of the noise, and some more enterprising spirits, among whom even nuns could be noticed, who climbed out on the roofs on the chance of getting a distant view of the casket, of the cortège or of anything that offered.

The procession traversed every quarter of the city. At each of the crossroads, or open spaces where the principal streets debouched into a boulevard, and which then retained their ancient appellation of *carrobi,* now preserved by only one of them, a halt was made and the casket was set down by one of the crosses which St. Charles had erected at each of these points during the preceding plague and of which some are still standing. So that it was a short time after noon when they returned to the cathedral.

Then, on the following day, at the very height of the pre-

sumptuous confidence, nay, in many minds the fanatical certainty, that the procession was going to mark the end of the plague, the death-rate increased so excessively among all classes and in all parts of the city that no one could fail to see in the procession itself the cause or the occasion of this sudden rise. But (how sad and how wonderful the strength of a general prejudice!) it was not at all to the bringing together of so many persons for so long a time, nor to the infinite opportunities of contact it afforded, that people attributed such a result, but to the increased facility with which anointers could execute their impious designs on a large scale. It was said that they mingled in the crowds and infected with their unguents as many as they could reach.

But, since such a means did not appear to be proportionate to a mortality so vast and so evenly distributed among all classes, and since the eye of suspicion itself, alert and clairvoyant though it be, could not detect smears or stains of any kind on the walls or elsewhere, an explanation of the fact was sought in another time-honored refuge of the medical science of a unanimous Europe—that of poisonous and magical powders. It was claimed that such powders were scattered along the streets and particularly at the halting-places, and were caught up by the skirts and, still more, by the bare feet of the pedestrians, great numbers of whom had gone without shoes. "Hence," writes a contemporary,[7] "the same day witnessed the conflict of piety and impiety, perfidy and sincerity, of spiritual gain and temporal loss." Whereas it was naught but the conflict of poor human reason with the fancies itself had created.

From that day forth the pest raged with a constantly increasing fury. In a short time there was not a house which escaped. The population of the *lazaretto,* according to Somaglia, whom we have before quoted, soon mounted from two thousand to twelve thousand. Later on, on the testimony of almost all, it reached sixteen thousand. On July 4, as I find in another letter from the board of health to the governor, the daily death-rate

[7] Agostino Lampugnano. La Pestilenza Seguita in Milano l'Anno 1630. Milan, 1634, page 44.

exceeded five hundred. Still later, at the peak of the mortality, it reached from twelve hundred to fifteen hundred, according to the most common calculation, and, if we are to believe Tadino, thirty-five hundred. The latter authority asserts that investigations made subsequently showed Milan's population of two hundred and fifty thousand to have been reduced to sixty-four thousand. According to Ripamonti, it had been only two hundred thousand. The municipal registers, he says, recorded one hundred and forty thousand deaths, to say nothing of those that went unrecorded. Others place them higher or lower, but by still more random processes of calculation.

The reader is left to imagine the plight in which the decurions must have been, on whom weighed the burden of making provision for the public necessities and of remedying what was remediable in such a catastrophe. They had every day to fill vacancies and increase the forces of the public servants: *monatti,* apparitors, commissaries. The first-named were employed in the most laborious and dangerous offices of the plague—removing corpses from the house, the streets, the *lazaretto;* carting them to the cemeteries and interring them; leading or carrying patients to the *lazaretto* and tending them; burning or fumigating infected or suspected belongings.

Ripamonti derives the name from the Greek *monos,* Gaspare Bigatti (in a description of the preceding plague) from the Latin *monere.* But at the same time the latter with greater reason conjectures that it may be a German word, seeing that the bearers of the name were for the most part recruited in Switzerland or the Grisons. Nor would it, in fact, be absurd to believe it a corruption of the word *monathlick* (monthly), since, in the uncertainty that existed as to the duration of their needfulness, it is likely that they were engaged only from one month to the next.

The special function of the apparitors was to go before the dead-carts and warn pedestrians off by ringing a bell. The commissaries gave orders to both under the immediate authority of the board of health. The *lazaretto* had to be kept continually supplied with physicians, surgeons, medicines, victuals and all the

accessories of an infirmary. New lodgings had to be found and made ready for the influx every day. Cabins of wood and straw were hurriedly built to this end in the central space of the *lazaretto,* and another enclosure, surrounded only by palings, was laid out and filled with cabins capable of accommodating four thousand persons. These not sufficing, two more were decided on and actually started, but abandoned for lack of means and left unfinished. And not only material means, but men and courage were decreasing in the same proportion as the need increased.

And not only did accomplishment fall short of planning and ordaining; not only was scant provision made even on paper for many only too evident needs; impotence and desperation reached the pitch where many of the most pitiful, as well as most urgent cases, were left without any provision whatsoever. A great number of infants, for instance, whose mothers had died of the plague, were perishing from neglect. The board of health proposed that an asylum be founded for these waifs and that likewise something be done for the lying-in of indigent women; but the suggestions came to naught. "Still was one fain," writes Tadino, "to pitie ye Decurions of ye Citie, sorely tried, discouraged and harassed by ye Soldierie without any measure or consideracion, and with even less in ye unhappy duchie, inasmuch as no provision nor succor could be gotten from ye Gouernor, but onlie that it was a time of Warre and that ye Soldiers must be well treated."[8] Of such importance was the taking of Casale! So excellent a thing the sheer glory of conquest, independent of the occasion and the object of the fight!

A similar inadequacy existed in the matter of burial facilities. There was, indeed, one large pit, but only one, which had been dug nigh to the *lazaretto;* but this was soon filled up, so that unburied corpses began to accumulate, not only here, but in every section of the city. The magistrates, after having in vain sought hands for the dreadful task, were at last reduced to the point of saying that they knew not where to turn. Nor do we see how the state of affairs might have ended, had not help come from an extraordinary quarter. The president of the board

[8] Page 117.

of health in desperation appealed with tears in his eyes to the same two worthy friars who presided over the *lazaretto*. Father Michele engaged to rid the city of its corpses in four days, and promised to have enough pits open at the end of eight days not only for the present needs but for the worst plight that the future could hold in store. Accompanied by a confrère and by officials of the board assigned to him by its president, he left the city and went out into the country in search of peasants; and thanks partly to the authority of the board, and partly to that of his habit and his words, he collected about two hundred laborers and put them to digging three immense pits. He then sent *monatti* from the *lazaretto* to gather up the dead, and, in short, the appointed day found his promise redeemed.

Once the *lazaretto* was without physicians. Offers of fat pay and coveted honors attracted some—but far too few—to the work, and these came tardily and reluctantly. Victuals were often at the very point of exhaustion, and starvation threatened death no less than the pestilence. More than once they were at their wits' end to provide the bare necessaries for subsistence, when abundant relief came unexpectedly from private charity. For, amid the general stupor and indifference to the welfare of others bred by continually fearing for one's self, there were some souls always alive to the demands of charity and others in whom charity awoke unbidden with the cessation of all earthly happiness. Just as there were some officials who kept to their posts unflinchingly, with unimpaired health and unabated courage, while many others succumbed to the plague or fled from the duty of managing and providing. Still others, moved by pity, virtuously assumed and perseveringly discharged tasks which their occupation did not impose on them.

Those who were most conspicuous for the readiness, the constancy and the universality of their devotion to the difficult duties of the time, were the ecclesiastics. Their assistance was never wanting either at the *lazaretto* or in the city. Where there was suffering there also was the priest. One saw them lost in the confusion of the sick and the dying, sometimes sick and dying themselves. To their spiritual services they added temporal

ministrations, as the means permitted. They bent themselves to every task that the circumstances created. More than sixty pastors in the city alone died of the plague, or about eight-ninths of the total number.

Federigo was an inspiration and an example to all, as might have been expected. Almost his whole household died around him, but, when relatives, high magistrates and neighboring princes urged him to flee from danger and retire into some villa, he rejected their counsellings and resisted their importunities with that same intrepid spirit which dictated his admonition to the clergy. "Be disposed," he directed, "rather to abandon this mortal life than desert your flock, your children. Go out to meet the plague lovingly, as if to win a prize or a new lease of life, when there is a soul to gain to Christ."[9]

He did not neglect such precautions as did not interfere with the performance of duty, and on this same subject also he issued instructions and regulations to his clergy. At the same time he gave no heed to danger, nay, appeared unconscious of it, whenever he must go through it on a mission of mercy. Not to speak of ecclesiastics, at whose side he stood unceasingly, to praise and regulate their zeal, to spur on such as went about their work lukewarmly, to send incumbents to posts vacated by death, he so willed that his door should be left open to whosoever needed him. He visited the *lazaretto* to give consolation to the sick and encouragement to the attendants. He scoured the city, bearing relief to poor wretches quarantined in their homes, pausing under the window to hear their laments and to exchange words of consolation and good cheer. In short, he plunged right into the midst of the plague and lived there, so that it was much to his own astonishment in the end that he had come through unscathed.

So it is that, in public misfortunes and protracted interruptions of the accustomed civil order (such as it may be), we always observe an increase and a sublimation of virtue. But an increase, and ordinarily a proportionately large increase, is also to be noted in crime. This rule also received illustration.

[9] Ripamonti, page 164.

Scoundrels, left unscathed by the plague and insensible to its terrors, found in the general confusion and the relaxation of all law a new opportunity for exercising their trade and at the same time a new guarantee of impunity. Nay, the enforcement of the law was even placed in the hands of the most desperate among them. The office of *monatto* and apparitor, generally speaking, was adapted only to those who were swayed more by the allurement of rapine and licentiousness than by fear of the epidemic and every natural feeling of repugnance. Strict rules were imposed on them, and severe penalties were threatened. Their posts were assigned them by the commissaries; and above the latter as well as above the former, as we have said, were placed magistrates and nobles in every quarter of the town with authority to provide summarily for every exigency of good government.

This order of things survived and proved effective for a certain time, but, as each day swelled the number of deaths, departures and moral collapses in the ranks, the subordinates were eventually left without any one to hold them in check. The *monatti* in particular constituted themselves supreme arbiters. They entered one's home like masters, nay, like enemies, and, without speaking of their thefts and their treatment of the unhappy wretches who were reduced to the extremity of being tended by them, they laid their hands, steeped in crime and pestilence as they were, upon the well,—children, parents, wives, husbands of the sufferer,—and threatened to drag them off to the *lazaretto* unless they were paid a ransom.

At other times they set a price on their services and refused to remove corpses that were already putrefying unless for a consideration of so many crowns. It is said (and the irresponsible tongues of some and the vicious characters of others make it equally hazardous either to believe or refuse belief)—it is said, and even Tadino asserts it,[10] that *monatti* and apparitors dropped infectious matter from their carts in order to propagate and foster the plague, which had come to give them a livelihood, an empire, a perpetual holiday. Other shameless wretches, mas-

[10] Page 102.

querading as *monatti,* with a bell attached to their foot as the prescribed and distinctive signal of their approach, made their way into houses for the express purpose of depredation. Sometimes (where the doors stood open, and the house was either empty or occupied only by the sick and dying) thieves entered boldly to pillage without any attempt at concealment. Even the police broke in to steal, or for worse purposes still. Panic grew apace with crime. Errors already rampant gained extraordinary strength from the existing dismay and mental excitement, and produced results more promptly and on a larger scale. They all served more or less to intensify and magnify the one predominent fear, that of anointers, which in its effects and in its reprisals deserved, as we have seen, to be ranked as a crime itself. The image of that supposed danger beset and tortured the general mind much more than the danger that was real and actually present. "And," says Ripamonti, "while the constant spectacle of corpses strewn in one's way or heaped up in piles made the city like one great charnel-house, there was something more ghastly still in that mutual fierceness of distrust, that unnatural orgy of suspicion. It was not the neighbor alone that was under its cloud, nor the friend, nor the guest; but those names, those ties of human love, of husband and wife, father and son, brother and sister, were fraught with terror; and (horrible to state!) the domestic hearth and the nuptial couch were feared as ambushes and lurking-places of the poisoner's activity."

The supposed ubiquity and the uncanny character of the plot upset all the common-sense notions and rational premises on which mutual confidence reposes. In the beginning it was believed that the supposed anointers were actuated only by ambition and cupidity, but, as time went on, it was imagined, and then held for certain, that they were animated by some diabolical delight in anointing, some fascination that completely overpowered the will of the practitioner. The ravings of invalids, who accused themselves of that which they had feared from others, were taken as so many revelations and made nothing seem incredible about any one. And still more than by their words were they condemned by their acts, if, in their delirium, they

went through a pantomime of what were identified as the motions of anointing—a thing that was natural enough and at the same time admirably calculated to corroborate the general conviction and the statements of many writers.

Thus, in the long and melancholy period of witchcraft trials, the confessions of the accused, not always extorted confessions either, served not a little to promote and maintain the common conviction in regard to sorcery. Because, when an opinion prevails for a long time and throughout a good part of the world, it ends by expressing itself in all possible modes, passing through all possible phases, and running through the whole gamut of progressive conviction, and it is hard for all men, or well-nigh all men, to believe persistently that a certain incredible thing is being done, without some one eventually coming to believe that he himself is doing it.

Among the tales which this obsession of anointing engendered there is one which deserves particular mention, both for the credit it acquired and the wide circuit it traversed. It was related —not in the same manner by all (which would be too singular a privilege for fables), but to the same effect—that on such and such a day, such and such a person had seen a coach-and-six draw up in the cathedral-square. Sitting in the coach, among others, was a great personage with swarthy features glowing like fire, blazing eyes, bristling hair and menacing lips. While the spectator was standing and looking on intently, the carriage halted, and the coachman invited him to get in, without his ever being able to say "Nay." After many detours they dismounted at the portal of such and such a palace, where upon his entering with the rest he came upon scenes now pleasant, now forbidding, blooming gardens and barren wastes, dismal caverns and elegant saloons, where a council of phantoms was in session. He was at length shown great coffers full of diamonds, and told to take as many as he wished, the only stipulation being that he should accept a vial of poison and go about the city anointing with its contents. Being unwilling to consent, he then found himself in a trice back in the place whence he had been transported.

This tale, in which our people believed implicitly and which,

according to Ripamonti, was not ridiculed as it should have been by certain weighty authorities,[11] circulated throughout Italy and beyond its borders. In Germany it was made the subject of a print. The Archbishop-Elector of Mayence wrote to ask Cardinal Federigo what was to be thought of the marvelous stories that were told about Milan. He was told in reply that they were idle dreams.

Of equal value, though of a different nature, were the dreams of the learned, as their effects were equally disastrous. They saw, or most of them saw, the reason at once and the announcement of the prevalent evils in a comet which had appeared in 1628, and in a conjunction of Saturn with Jupiter, "this conjunctionne pointing so clerely to the yere 1630," writes Tadino, "that any one might perceiue it. *Mortales parat morbos, miranda videntur.*" This prediction, taken, it was said, from a book printed in Turin in 1623 and entitled *The Mirror of Perject Almanacs,* was on everybody's lips. Another comet, which appeared during June of the plague-year, was taken as a fresh warning and a visible proof of anointings. They thumbed their books for instances of what they called manufactured plagues, and they found them but too abundantly. They quoted Livy, Tacitus, Dion—nay, Homer and Ovid, and any of the ancients who related similar occurrences or made the least allusion to them. Of the moderns they had a richer harvest still.

They would quote a hundred other writers who had treated professedly or spoken incidentally of poisons, charms and magical ointments or powders: Cesalpina, Cardano, Grevino, Salio, Pareo, Schenchio, Zachia and—to make an end of the list—the baleful Delrio, who, if the fame of authors were in proportion to the good or evil wrought by their works, must be reckoned one of the most famous of all; that same Delrio whose lucubrations have cost more human lives than the campaigns of certain conquerors, the same whose *Disquisitions on Magic* (the epitome of all that men had dreamed on this subject up to his time), the most authoritative and irrefragable textbook of the science, was

[11] "Apud prudentium plerosque, non sicuti debuerat irrisa." De Peste, etc., page 77.

for more than a century the justification and powerful incentive of one unbroken series of the most horrible legal murders.

From the allegations of the vulgar the learned classes took what they could accommodate to their ideas; from the allegations of the learned classes the vulgar took what they could grasp and as they could grasp it: and the result was a confused and distorted mass of public folly.

But what causes greater wonder still is to find the physicians —the physicians, I say, who had believed in the plague from the beginning, and Tadino in particular, who had foretold it, seen it come, followed every phase of its progress, who had declared and preached that it was the plague, that it was propagated by contact, and that, unless this were guarded against, the whole country would become infected—to find him later on drawing conclusive arguments for poisonous and magical anointings from the very effects which he had prognosticated; to find him, after identifying delirium as one of the symptoms of the disease in the case of the above-mentioned Carlo Colonna, who was the second to die of plague in Milan, advancing later on a similar fact in proof of anointings and diabolic conspiracy: the fact, namely, that two witnesses had testified to having heard a sick friend relate how one night certain persons had come into his bedroom and offered him health and wealth if he would consent to anoint the houses of the neighborhood, and how, upon his refusing, these persons had gone away and, in their place, a wolf had staid behind under the bed and three immense cats on top of it, "who had there remained until the break of day."[12]

Had it been only one who was given to romancing thus, it might be said that he was crack-brained, or rather that there was no need to speak of it. But since it was many, in fact almost all, who wrote in this wise, it becomes part of the history of the human mind and furnishes us with an opportunity to observe how one orderly and rational series of ideas can be confounded by another series of ideas falling across its track. For the rest, Tadino was one of the most reputable men of his time in this region.

[12] Pages 123, 124.

Two illustrious and well-deserving writers have affirmed that Cardinal Federigo was in doubt as to the fact of the anointings.[13] We wish that we could make our praise of his glorious and amiable memory still more unconditional and represent the good churchman in this, as in so many other particulars, superior to the great majority of his contemporaries, but instead, we are constrained to note in him another instance of the influence of common opinion even upon the noblest intellects. It has been seen, at least from what Ripamonti deposes, how at the beginning he was really in doubt. He never ceased subsequently to allow for the part that credulity had to play in that opinion, together with ignorance, fear and the desire to apologize for tardiness in recognizing the plague and applying the remedies. That there was much exaggeration, he never doubted, but that there was also some truth, he likewise admitted.

There is a brochure on the plague in the Ambrosian Library written in his own hand, and this view is there often implied and once enunciated expressly. It was the common opinion, he says in substance, that these ointments were compounded in sundry places and that many were the alleged methods of applying them; of which some appear to us to have been actually practiced and others merely imagined. His words are as follows: *"Unguenta vero haec aiebant componi conficique multifariam, fraudisque vias fuisse complures; quarum sane fraudum, et artium, aliis quidem assentimur, alias vero fictas fuisse commentitiasque arbitramur."*[14]

There were some, however, who thought consistently and to the end of their lives that it was all imaginary. We know this, not from themselves, since no one had the hardihood to espouse publicly a conviction so contrary to the general belief—we know it only from those writers who ridicule and condemn, or even refute it, as the prejudice of the few, an error which dared not commit itself to open controversy, but which still subsisted. We also know it from such as learned of it from tradition. "I

[13] Muratori, Del Governo della Peste. Modena, 1714, page 117.—P. Verri, Op. cit., page 261.

[14] De Pestilentia Quae Mediolani Anno 1630 Magnam Stragem Edidi

have met sensible folk," says the worthy Muratori in the passage cited before, "who had full reports from their forbears, and were not well persuaded of the truth of these poisonous ointments." It was, we see, truth venting itself in secret, a domestic confidence. Good sense was not altogether lacking, but it kept in hiding for fear of the sense called common.

As for the magistrates, decimated from day to day and always more at sea, they employed the little resolution they could summon up in searching for these anointers. Among the papers of the period dealing with the plague which are preserved in the above-named archives, there is a letter (unaccompanied by any related document) in which the high-chancellor seriously and with great precaution informs the governor of a warning he had received that in a country-seat of the two brothers, Girolamo and Giulio Monti, Milanese nobleman, poisons were being concocted on such a large scale that forty men were occupied *en este exercicio,*[15] with the assistance of four noblemen of Brescia. who imported their materials from the Veneto *para la fabrica del veneno.*[16] He adds that he had with great difficulty arranged to send the Podestà of Milan and the auditor of the board of health to the scene with thirty cavalrymen; that one of the brothers had been warned only too punctually, and that probably by the auditor himself, who was a friend of the suspected, so that the evidences of the crime had been destroyed; that the said auditor had found excuses for not setting out; but that, notwithstanding the podestà had gone with the cavalry *a reconocer la casa, y a ver si hallara algunos vestigios,*[17] to gather information, and to arrest all who were incriminated.

The matter must have fallen through, because the documents of the time which speak of the suspicion attaching to these noblemen make no mention of any sequel. But there were other cases where prejudice found what it was seeking only too readily.

The consequent trials were certainly not the first of their kind, nor can they be considered among the rarities of the history of

[15] In this industry.

[16] For the manufacture of poison.

[17] To reconnoitre the house and see if some evidence could be found.

jurisprudence. Not to mention antiquity at all, and to do no more than glance at periods bordering on the one in question, Palermo afforded instances of such trials in 1526, Geneva in 1530, in 1545, and again in 1574, Casale in Montferrat in 1536, Padua in 1555, Turin in 1599 and again in this same year of 1630. In each case one or more unhappy wretches were prosecuted and condemned to torture, generally of the most atrocious description, on the charge of having propagated the plague with powders, ointments or witchcraft, or by the use of all three together. But the case of the so-called anointings at Milan, as it was the most celebrated, is also the easiest of verification; or, at least, it presents a larger field for study, on account of the more circumstantial and authentic records of it which survive. And, although a writer whom we praised some pages back has given it his attention, still the facts seem to us to offer materials for a new work on the subject, his project having been not so much to compose a history of this episode as to draw on it for arguments proper to a thesis of greater, or certainly of more immediate, importance still. But it is not a subject to be disposed of in a few words; and this is not the place to treat it with the fulness it deserves. Besides, after poring over its details, the reader would surely not care any longer about hearing the rest of our tale. Reserving, therefore, for another time the history and examination of individual cases,[18] we come back at

[18] [This promised work appeared in 1840 in conjunction with the revised edition of "I Promessi Sposi" under the title of "La Colonna Infame"—"The Column of Infamy." Though slight in bulk and devoid of the qualities that make a popular appeal, it is a work that is well worthy of Manzoni's pen, but failed of a proper reception because the public had been led by persistent rumors to expect a new historical romance. It is a refutation, based on the most careful study of documents and a most unerring appraisal of testimony, of Verri's contention that the iniquitous sentence passed on the anointers was a result of the ignorance of the times and the barbarity of the laws. With an unsurpassed power of psychological analysis and an unflinching application of moral standards to the actions of a past age, he shows that ultimately the responsibility for the tragedy must be placed on the judges, that the evidence was not sufficient to condemn the accused and that the judges were swayed more by cowardice than by respect for the laws, imperfect as they were. He thus anticipated the advice offered by Lord Acton as the most solemn injunc-

length to the characters of our story, not to quit them again till the end.

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tion he could find to lay on his successors in taking leave of them: "To try others by the final maxim that governs your own lives, and to suffer no man and no cause to escape the undying penalty which history has the power to inflict on wrong." Lectures on Modern History, Macmillan and Co., 1918, page 24.—TRANSLATOR.]

Chapter XXXIII

One night towards the end of August, just at the height of the plague, Don Rodrigo was returning to his residence in Milan accompanied by the faithful Griso, one of the three or four that still survived of his whole household. He was coming from a gathering of friends accustomed to carouse together as a means of beguiling the melancholy of the time. Each day new faces were to be seen, old acquaintances were missing. On that evening Don Rodrigo had been one of the merriest. Among other quips, he had excited the laughter of the company by a sort of funeral oration on Count Attilio, carried off by the plague two days before.

As he walked homewards, he was conscious of being indisposed. He noticed a languor, a weakness of the legs, a difficulty in breathing, a feverishness, which he would fain have ascribed to the wine, the weather, the long vigil. He never once opened his lips on the way, and the first word on arriving home was to order Griso to make a light and show him to his chamber. When they were within, Griso observed his master's face—distorted, inflamed, the eyes bursting from their sockets and shining like coals of fire. He stood off, because under such circumstances every rapscallion had of necessity acquired the eye of a doctor.

"Think me not ill," said Don Rodrigo, reading in Griso's demeanor the thought that was passing through his mind. "I'm the best i' the world; but I have drunk too deep, maybe. They served that Vernaccia!—But with a good sleep 'twill all pass. I'm numb with sleep—Take away that light; it blindeth me —'twill drive me mad!"

"A prank of the wine," said Griso, keeping his distance undiminished. "But go to bed out of hand; the sleep will do your lordship good."

"Thou speakest true—if I can but sleep. For the rest, I am well. Meanwhile leave the bell near by, lest I should need aught tonight. And give heed, d'ye see, if you hear me ring. But I shall need nothing. Take away that accursed light—quickly," he resumed, as Griso was fulfilling his order without approaching any closer than was necessary. "The de'il! that it should irk me thus!"

Grisco took the light, and, bidding the master good-night, hurried away, while the latter thrust himself between the sheets.

But the bed-covers weighed on him like a mountain. He threw them off, and huddled himself up to sleep, for he was, in fact, exceedingly tired. But hardly had he closed his eyes than he woke with a great start, as though some one had come and shaken him for spite. The heat became more oppressive; his frenzy increased. He fell back on the thought of the August weather, the wine, the excitement. He would fain have blamed them for all. But these ideas invariably gave way to another that was then associated with every thought, entered at every sense, thrust itself even into the frivolous talk of the debauch, because it was easier to turn it into a joke than to pass it over in silence—the plague.

After tossing about a long time he at length fell asleep. Then began a series of the wildest and most hideous of dreams. One succeeded to another, until he seemed to be in a large church, pushing farther and farther to the front, in the midst of a great throng of people. How he came there or why, especially at such a time as this, he could not tell, and was exasperated at his situation. He looked at those about him. Their faces were yellow and ghastly, their lips sagged, their eyes were bleared and vacant —a beggarly lot with their garments falling to pieces on them and blotches and boils showing through the rents. "Fall back, ye riffraff!" he seemed to bawl out, fixing his eye on the door that was so far, far away and accompanying his injunction with a menacing look, without, however, advancing one step—nay, shrinking back so as not to touch these filthy bodies, which nevertheless pressed against him from every side.

None of the insensate throng gave signs of wishing to recede,

or even of hearing. On the contrary, they crowded him more closely. Above all, it appeared that one of them was thrusting his elbow into his left side between the heart and the arm-pit, where he felt a painful stabbing and pressure. If he struggled to get free, immediately something else seemed to prick him in the same place. Infuriated, he reached for his sword, but it seemed to have been forced up and out of the scabbard by the press of people, and the hilt was now precisely what was boring into him. He put his hand to the spot. There was no sword, but the piercing pain was intensified. He bellowed in his frenzy and was about to scream louder still, when the faces of all seemed to turn in one particular direction. He looked also.

There stood a pulpit, and above the balustrade rose a bright, smooth convex object of some kind. It continued to rise until he could distinctly make out a human head fringed with hair, a pair of eyes, a man's face, a long white beard, a friar standing clear of the balustrade down to his cincture. It was Fra Cristoforo. He shot a lightning glance across the whole audience, until it seemed to Don Rodrigo to rest full on himself, raising his hand aloft at the same time in the attitude he had once struck in the lower chamber of his palace. Then he, too, raised his hand impetuously and made an effort as if to hurl himself forward and grab that uplifted arm. A muffled growl that had been gurgling in his throat broke out into a loud yell, and he awoke. He dropped the arm which he had actually raised, and was for a time at pains to recollect himself and open fully his eyes, for the brightness of broad daylight now annoyed him as much as the candle had done the preceding night. He recognized his bed and his bed-chamber. He gathered that it had all been a dream. Church, people, friar, had all vanished—all but one thing, the pain in his left side. At the same time he felt his heart throbbing violently, painfully, a continual hissing and roaring in his ears, a fire burning within him, a heaviness in all his members worse than when he went to bed. He hesitated for some moments before looking at the spot where he felt the pain. At length he uncovered it and gave one frightened glance. He saw a hideous boil of a livid hue.

He felt himself a ruined man. The horror of death took hold of him, and, perhaps more forcibly still, the horror of falling a prey to the *monatti,* of being carried off and thrown into the *lazaretto.* Casting about for some means of avoiding such a horrible fate, he felt his thoughts grow confused and indistinct and saw the moment approach when his wits would desert him, except just enough to bid him despair. He seized the bell and rang it violently. Griso appeared at once and stood at attention. He halted at a certain distance from the bed, surveyed his master carefully, and made sure of what he had suspected the evening before.

"Griso!" quoth Don Rodrigo, bringing himself with difficulty to a sitting position. "You have always been faithful."

"Yes, your lordship."

"I have always been your benefactor."

"Thanks to your kindness."

"I can count upon you——!"

"The de'il!"

"I'm ill, Griso."

"I had perceived it."

"If I get well, I shall be a greater benefactor to you than before."

Griso made no reply, but remained waiting for the conclusion to which all these preambles led.

"I will trust myself to none but thee," resumed Don Rodrigo. "Do me a favor, Griso."

"At your service," replied the latter, his usual formula contrasting strangely with his master's very unusual style of address.

"Know you where Chiodo, the surgeon, lives?"

"Very well."

"He is an honorable man, who, if he be paid well, doth not reveal his patients. Go summon him. Tell him I shall give him four crowns, six crowns a visit—more if he demands it. Only let him come at once and handle the matter well, so that no one is the wiser."

"Well bethought," said Griso. "I go, and shall return at once."

"Hark, Griso; give me a little water first. I have such a burning fever I can hardly stand it."

"Nay, my lord," replied Griso, "not without the doctor's advice. These be treacherous ailments; there is no time to lose. Remain quiet, and in a hop, skip and jump I'll be back with Chiodo."

So saying, he departed, closing the door behind him.

Don Rodrigo, drawing the bed-clothes about him again, accompanied Griso in imagination to Chiodo's house, counted his steps, calculated the time. Every once in a while he would look at his boil, but instantly would turn away in disgust. After some time he began to strain his ears for the sound of the surgeon's arrival, and this effort of the attention suspended the sense of pain and kept his thoughts in order. All at once he heard a distant tinkling, which seemed, however, to proceed not from the street but from the rooms of his house. He listened. It became louder and steadier, and at the same time he heard the tramp of feet. A horrid suspicion shot across his mind. He sat up and listened more intently still. There was a muffled sound in the adjoining room as of a weight set down cautiously. He thrust his legs out of the bed in the act of arising and looked towards the door. It opened, and two ragged and filthy red uniforms, two brutalized faces—in a word, two *monatti*—appeared. Behind the half-closed door he caught a partial sight of Griso, who remained there peeping in.

"Hah! Scoundrel of a traitor! Avaunt! ye vermin! Biondino! Carlotto! Help! Murder!" screamed Don Rodrigo, and thrust his hand under the pillow to grasp a pistol. He pulled it forth. But at his first yell the *monatti* had leaped towards the bed. The quicker of the two pounced on him before he could achieve his purpose, forced the pistol from his grasp and sent it hurtling through the air. He then flung his assailant back into bed and held him there, roaring with rage and indignation: "Hah, caitiff! Thou wouldst attack the *monatti!* the agents of the law! the missioners of mercy!"

"Hold him fast till we remove him," directed his fellow, making

for the treasure box. At that Griso entered and proceeded to help in breaking the lock.

"Varlet!" screamed Don Rodrigo, glaring at his dependent from beneath his captor and struggling to loose himself from his vise-like grip. "Let me first kill that wretch," he then besought the *monatti,* "and ye may do with me what ye will." Then he began again to hallo for his other servants with all the voice that remained to him. But it was useless. The unspeakable Griso had sent them off to a safe distance with fraudulent orders from their master before going for the *monatti* and proposing that they should come and that the booty should be divided among them.

"Peaceably, peaceably," his jailer cautioned the unfortunate Don Rodrigo, whom he held pinioned against the bed. Then, turning his glance at the looters, "Deal fairly," he cried.

"Thou! thou!" bellowed Don Rodrigo at Griso, whom he could see busy with smashing fastenings and scooping out money and valuables to divide. "Thou—after all—! O devil in hell! I may get well yet." Griso did not breathe, nor did he, as far as he could avoid it, even look in the direction whence those words proceeded.

"Hold him tight," commanded the second *monatto;* "he is raving."

And it was now true. After a loud scream and a more violent effort to release himself, he fell back suddenly faint and unconscious. His eyes still continued to stare, however, as though he were in a trance, and every once in a while he gave a start or uttered a lament.

The *monatti* took hold of him, one by the feet, the other by the shoulders, and proceeded to lay him upon a stretcher which they had left in the next room. One of them returned for the loot. Then, taking up their miserable load, they started off.

Griso remained behind to choose hurriedly whatever else he could appropriate. He made a bundle of the whole and departed. He had been careful not to touch the *monatti* nor to be touched by them. But in the fury of his last search he had taken his master's clothes and shaken them without thinking of

aught else than the money they might contain. He had occasion to think of it on the day following, however, because, even while he stood tippling in a wine-cellar, he was taken suddenly with chills, his eyes swam, his strength fled, and he fell. Abandoned by his mates, he fell into the hands of the *monatti,* who robbed him of what he had left of the booty and threw him upon their cart, where he expired before even reaching the *lazaretto* whither his master had been conducted.

Leaving the latter in this abode of desolation, we must now go after another acquaintance, whose history would never have been interwoven with his at all had he not brought it about perforce (nay, but for this circumstance, it may be safely set down that neither of them would have had any history to tell) —Renzo, that is, whom we left at the new silk-mill under the name of Antonio Rivolta.

He had been there five or six months, more or less, when, hostilities being declared between the Venetian Republic and the King of Spain and all fear of vicarious investigations by the former being past, Bortolo took the trouble to go after Renzo and bring him back. This was partly because he liked Renzo, partly because Renzo, being a talented youth and an able craftsman, could be of great assistance to him in the management of a large factory, without ever aspiring to supplant him, by reason of that same plaguey inability to wield a pen. This consideration playing a part in his resolution, we are fain to mention it. Perhaps you, dear reader, would prefer a more ideal Bortolo. If so, I can do no more than bid you create one. This Bortolo was what we describe.

From that time on Renzo had worked under his cousin. More than once, and especially after receiving one of those tantalizing letters from Agnese, he had been tempted to turn soldier and end it all. Opportunities were not lacking. Because at that precise moment the republic had to increase its man-power. The temptation was all the stronger that there was some question of invading the Duchy of Milan. Naturally the idea of returning home a conquering hero, seeing Lucia and having a final explanation with her, cast a glamor on the project. But Bortolo

had always been able, with his suave ways, to shake this resolution.

"If they must, indeed, go thither," he would say, "they can go without thee, and thou canst follow at thy own leisure. If they return with bloody crowns, will it not have been better to bide at home? Of vagabonds to do their marching there is no dearth. And—they have not yet set foot on Milanese soil. As for me, I am a heretic. They may bark bravely enough, but the Duchy of Milan is a hard nut to crack. It is Spain they have to do with. Knowest thou the sort of customer Spain is, my lad? Saint Mark is mighty at home; but that is not the point. Have patience. Art not well off here?—I see what thou wouldst say; but, if Heaven decrees that it is to be, rest assured it will be, and the surer for not losing our heads. Some saint will help thee. Be assured 'tis not a calling for thee. Dost deem it fitting to leave off spinning silk to go a-murdering? What wouldst thou do in such company? It needs men made pat for the life."

At other times Renzo was for returning in disguise and under an assumed name. But this, too, Bortolo was able to discourage with reasons the reader can easily divine.

Then the plague broke out in the Duchy of Milan, and, as we have said, just where it adjoins Bergamask soil. It was not long in crossing over. And then—Fear not, that I shall relate the history of this also. It already exists, for such as wish to consult it, compiled by a certain Lorenzo Ghirardelli at the public behest. The book is rare and almost unknown, though it contains possibly more information than all the other descriptions of the plague combined. So precarious is the popularity of books!—But what we were going to say is that Renzo caught the plague, and cured himself—that is, he did nothing for it. He was at the point of death, but his constitution proved stronger than the disease, and in a few days he was out of danger. With the return of life, the memories, hopes, desires, plans that go with life reasserted themselves with new vigor. Or, in other words, he thought more than ever of Lucia. What had become of her in such a crisis, when it was an exception to be alive?

To know nothing of her fate and be so near! And to remain in such uncertainty the Lord only knew how long! And, even though this were dissipated and all danger were passed and Lucia were found to be alive, there still remained that mysterious complication of the vow. "I shall go myself," he soliloquized. "I shall go and clear it all up at once." And he decided upon this course even before his legs could bear his weight. "If only she be alive! As to finding her, I shall find her safely enough. Then, once for all, I shall hear from her own lips about this vow. I'll prove to her that it cannot hold, and bring her back with me—her and poor Agnese, if she, too, be alive. She was fond of me, and I daresay liketh me well enough still. And the warrant? Umph! They have something else to think of now, those of them that are left. We see them parading about here securely enough, I notice, in spite of warrants—unless, indeed, there is no reprieve except for scoundrels. And at Milan they say things are at loose ends even more than here. If I now let slip such a fine opportunity" (the plague, God save us! See how we are betrayed by the blessed instinct of referring and subordinating everything to our precious selves!), "such another may never recur!"

We should not give up hope, my dear Renzo.

Hardly was he able to drag himself along when he went in search of Bortolo, who had succeeded in escaping the plague so far and kept himself carefully aloof. Renzo did not enter the house, but hailed him from the street. Bortolo appeared at a window.

"Ah! ah!" cried the latter. "So you have come through unscathed. Lucky man!"

"My legs are a trifle unsteady, as you see; but as for danger, 'tis past and gone."

"Marry! I would I were in your shoes. To say 'I'm well' was once to say it all, but now it availeth little. But to reach the point where one may say 'I'm better,' ah! that hath a merry sound in truth."

Having wished his cousin good luck, Renzo broached his plan.

"Go this time, and Heaven's blessing go with thee," replied

the other. "Seek to elude the law, as I shall seek to elude the pest, and, if God wills we both succeed, we shall meet again."

"Oh! I shall return, never fear. And if it were only to be not alone! Peace! I shall not give up hope."

"By all means come back together. Because, God willing, there will be work for all, and we shall make a happy family. If only you find me alive, and this everlasting epidemic be over!"

"We shall meet! we shall meet! we must meet again!"

"I repeat, if God wills."

For some days Renzo kept in training to test his strength and increase it, and hardly did travel appear possible when he prepared to leave. In a belt beneath his clothing he put the fifty crowns, which he had never touched and the existence of which he had not breathed, even to Bortolo. Besides this he provided himself with some loose change, the result of his careful hoarding from day to day, and a letter of recommendation made out to him as a precaution under the name of Antonio Rivolta by his second master. He tied some clothing in a bundle, which he tucked under his arm, and into the pocket of his breeches he thrust a poniard—the very least concession an honest lad could make to the custom of the day. Thus accoutred, he took to the road at the end of August, or three days after Don Rodrigo had been conveyed to the *lazaretto*. Not wishing to blunder blindly about Milan, he bent his steps towards Lecco, where he hoped to find Agnese still alive and to learn from her a beginning of the many things he wanted to know.

The few convalescents from the plague were like a real privileged class among the rest of the population. A great percentage of the latter were either sick or dying, and such of them as had escaped the scourge, were living in continual dread of it—going about with jealous aloofness and caution, picking their steps, suspicion in their eyes, haste and hesitation contending in their gait; because every object about them might be a weapon to deal them a mortal wound. The former, on the contrary, secure, or well-nigh secure, in their immunity (because a second attack of the disease partook rather of the marvelous than of the unusual), wandered about amid the general contagion un-

concerned and unhesitating—not unlike the knights of a certain period of the Middle Ages, encased in iron to their very eyes and mounted upon chargers enveloped like themselves in mail, who went strolling about (whence their glorious designation of knights-errant) leisurely and aimlessly amid a beggarly swarm of pedestrian burghers and peasants, who wore, to deaden or ward off the blows that came their way, no other armor than rags. Wise, useful and ornamental institution! Truly an institution to bulk large in a tractate on political economy!

Armed with this sort of confidence, which was qualified, however, by the anxieties to which the reader is privy, and sobered by the frequent spectacle and the constant consciousness of the general calamity, Renzo wended his way homeward through a smiling landscape and under a glorious sky, but without meeting any one for long stretches of dismal solitude except some wanderer, resembling rather a ghost from the tomb than a living being, or some corpse being borne to the burial-pit without funeral pomp or requiem or mourners. About midday he stopped in a wood to eat some bread and cheese he had brought along. As for fruit, it only awaited his picking all along the road, a superabundance of it: figs, peaches, plums, apples, as many as he could have desired. It only needed that he enter the fields to pluck them from the branches or gather them from the ground, where they lay as if the trees had been stripped by hail. Because that year was extraordinarily productive, especially of fruit, without any one paying heed to it. The grapes almost hid the foliage, but were left at the mercy of the first-comer.

Towards evening he descried his village. At sight of it, prepared though he must have been, he felt his heart stop. He was assailed all at once by a crowd of painful recollections and painful presentiments. His ears seemed to ring with the sinister tolling of the bell which had accompanied, or rather, pursued him on the occasion of his flight from home. At the same time he could feel a silence, as it were of death, that reigned about. He felt more strongly agitated still in coming out upon the square in front of the church. And still worse was to be expected at the termination of his jaunt, because the destination he had de-

termined upon was the house he had once been wont to call Lucia's. Now, at best, it could be only Agnese's, and the sole favor he hoped from Heaven was that he might find the latter there alive and well. And there he proposed to seek lodging, conjecturing rightly that his own house must be the haunt only of rats and polecats.

Being loath to show himself, he chose a byway—the same by which he had come, companioned so agreeably, to entrap his pastor on that awful night. His own cottage and vineyard lay on opposite sides of this path about half way to Agnese's, so that he could step into both for a moment to see how they prospered.

He kept a lookout ahead as he walked along, fearful of meeting some one, and yet anxious for an encounter. After a few paces he did, in fact, espy a man in his shirt-sleeves sitting on the ground with his back propped against a jasmine hedge in the attitude of an imbecile. From this, and also from a glance at the features, he seemed to recognize the poor half-witted Gervaso, who had come along as his second witness on that ill-omened expedition to the rectory. But, on approaching nearer, he was fain to recognize that it was, instead, the wide-awake Tonio—he who had then been the guardian. The plague, in robbing mind as well as body of their vigor, had brought out in feature and manner an incipient, covert resemblance which he used to have with his idiot brother.

"Oh! Tonio!" exclaimed Renzo, stopping in front of him; "is it thou?"

Tonio raised his eyes, without moving his head.

"Tonio! Do you not recognize me?"

"If it's your lot, your lot 'twill be," replied Tonio, his mouth remaining agape.

"It hath claimed thee, then. Poor Tonio! But do you no longer recognize me?"

"If 'tis your lot, your lot 'twill be," replied the other, with a foolish grin. Renzo, seeing that he would get no further with him, pursued his way, sadder than before. He had not proceeded far when lo! a black object turns a corner and comes

forward. He at once recognized Don Abbondio. The latter was walking at a snail's pace, carrying his cane as if it were carrying him instead, and the nearer he approached, the more plainly might one detect, in his thin, pallid countenance and in his every movement, the fact that he, too, had passed through the ordeal. He looked, in his turn. Did his eyes deceive him or not? True, the clothes were foreign-looking. But then, their foreign look was precisely Bergamask.

" 'Tis he as sure as fate," he said to himself, and threw up his hands with a movement of peevish surprise. The cane, which he held in his left hand, thus remained suspended aloft, and the sleeves, which were formerly filled to bursting, now hung loosely about his arms. Renzo hastened to meet him and made a reverence; because, though they had parted on the terms we know, still it was his pastor.

"Thou here? thou?" exclaimed Don Abbondio.

"I am here, as thou seest. Knowest thou aught of Lucia?"

"What wouldst thou have me know? There is naught to know. She is in Milan, if, indeed, she be still of this world. But thou——"

"And Agnese? Is she alive?"

"She may be. But how should I know? She is not here. But——"

"Where is she?"

"Gone to stay in the Valsassina with those relatives of hers at Pasturo whom you know of. They say the plague is not so rampant there. But thou, I say——"

"I am sorry. And Father Cristoforo——?"

"He left here long since. But——"

"I knew he had left. They sent me word of it. I asked, in case he might have returned."

"Returned, say you? One never heareth his name. But thou——"

"I am sorry for that, too."

"But thou, I say, what doest thou here in Heaven's name? Knowest thou naught of such trifles as a warrant——?"

"What matter? They have other things to bother with. I'm

come to look after my concerns as well as another. And so it is not known just——?"

"What wouldst thou look after? Anon there will be no one, nothing. And with that precious warrant dangling over thee, to venture right into the village, right into the wolf's mouth, is it prudent, I say? Take an old man's advice, who is wiser than thou perforce and speaketh out of the love he beareth thee. Bind thy shoes good and fast, and return whence thou camest before thou'rt seen. And, if so be thou hast been seen, then walk not but run. Thinkest thou that this is a healthy air for thee? Know you not what a business they had of searching and rummaging and turning inside out——?"

"I know too well, the rascally thieves."

"But why, then——?"

"But if I tell thee I care not. And he? Is he still alive? Is he here?"

"I tell thee that no one is here. I tell thee that here be no concerns for thee. I tell thee that——"

"I ask if he be here."

"Oh, merciful Heaven! Mend thy speech. Can it be you are still so touchy after all that hath happened?"

"Is he here, or not?"

"He is not. There! But the plague, my son, the plague! Who goes gadding about at such a time?"

"If there were naught but the plague to worry me—that is, on my own account. I have had it, and am quits."

"But then, was it not a warning? When one has so close a call, it seems to me that one should thank Heaven, and——"

"I am thankful, never fear."

"And not rush into more dangers, I say. Do as I say——"

"Your reverence hath had it too, if I mistake not."

"Had it, say you? In all its perfidy and villainousness. I'm here only by a miracle. Suffice it to say that it hath served me as thou seest. I had need now of a little quiet to pull myself together, see you. I was just beginning to feel better—in Heaven's name what hath brought thee hither? Return——"

"Return, return, return! To return, I had only to stay where

I was. What brings me hither? Oh, fie! I'm coming home like any one else."

"Home——?"

"Tell me, have many died here?"

"La! la! la!" exclaimed Don Abbondio; and, beginning with Perpetua, he told off a long bead-roll of individuals and entire families who had succumbed. Renzo had been expecting as much only too surely, but on hearing the names of so many acquaintances, friends and relatives he was grief-stricken, and, with head bowed, signified his sympathy by repeated exclamations of "Poor lad!" "Poor lass!" "Poor souls!"

"See you now," continued Don Abbondio; "this is not all. Unless the rest get some sense and drop their whimsies, 'twill mean nothing less than the end of the world."

"Never fear. I have no intention of biding here."

"Ah! Heaven be praised that at least so much discretion is left you! And, of course, you intend to return to Bergamask soil."

"Concern thyself no further."

"How? You would not play me some worse prank still?"

" 'Tis no concern of thine, I say. It is my affair. I'm no longer a child. I've reached the age of reason. I hope in the meantime your reverence will not tell that you have seen me. Thou'rt a priest, and I am one of thy sheep. Thou wouldst not betray me."

"I see," said Don Abbondio, sighing angrily; "I see. You would ruin yourself and me, too. You be not satisfied with all you have endured and all I have endured. I see, I see." And, continuing to mutter these words to himself, he resumed his way.

Renzo remained behind, sad and disappointed, thinking whither he would now go for shelter. In Don Abbondio's enumeration of deaths there was included a family of peasants, all of whom had been carried off by the epidemic except one youth of Renzo's own age, approximately, and his companion since childhood. The house was but a few paces outside the village. He decided to sleep there.

On the way he passed by his vineyard, and even from the out-

side he could conclude in what condition it was. Not a shoot, not a twig, could be seen above the wall of any tree of his planting. Any growth that was visible had sprung up in his absence. He looked through the opening (of a gate not so much as the hinges remained) and glanced his eye around. Poor vineyard! For two consecutive winters the villagers had gone for firewood to "poor Renzo's place," as they expressed it. Grape-vines, mulberries, fruit-trees of every sort—all had been ruthlessly uprooted or cut off just above the ground. Still one perceived the vestiges of former cultivation: broken rows of young offshoots, which nevertheless showed where the desolated lines had run; here and there scions and suckers of the mulberry, the fig, the peach, the cherry, the plum; but even this seemed lost—overwhelmed by a rank and varied growth of new vegetation that had arisen and thrived without the help of human hand. It was a riot of nettles and ferns, of darnel and couch-grass, of cock's-comb and wild oats, interspersed with orach, dandelion, sorrel, millet-grass and other plants of the same order—the order which the peasants of all countries have made up in their own way and designated as "weeds," or some similar term. It was a jumble of stems seeking to overtop one another in the air or to overreach one another along the ground—to usurp a place, in short, at any cost; a medley of leaves, flowers and fruits of a hundred colors, shapes and sizes; spikes, clusters, catkins, whorls and solitary blossoms of every hue.

Certain plants stood out more conspicuous and vivid amid the chaos, without, however, being any better than the rest, at least for the most part: the poke-weed, higher than all, with its long reddish stem, its majestic deep-green leaves, some of them already tipped with purple, and its drooping clusters of berries, purple at the base, red further up, then green, and a spear of whitish blossoms at the tip; the mullein, with its big woolly leaves flat against the ground, its stiff upright stem, and its long spikes studded with star-like yellow flowers; thistles, with their prickly coat over stem, leaf and flower, from the calyx of which protruded tufts of red and purple bloom or were wafted by the wind soft cargoes of silvery down. Here a mass of morning-

glory, twined about the sprouts of a mulberry stump, had draped them over with its drooping leaves and swung from their summit its garlands of delicate white bells; there the bryony, with its bright-red berries, had wound itself about the shoots of a grape-vine, which, after seeking in vain some firmer support, had joined its tendrils with the other's, and, merging together their combined strength and their not dissimilar foliage, they went on dragging each other downwards—as frequently happens to the weak when they take one another for support. Brambles were everywhere. They reached from plant to plant, thrusting their way in and out, up and down, now matting the branches of their host together, now forcing them apart, as chance determined. They even stretched across the entrance, and seemed to be there now to block the way of the owner himself.

But this latter had no inclination to enter such a vineyard, and probably the time he spent in contemplating it was not so long as that we have consumed with our brief sketch. He plodded on. His house stood hard by. Wading up to his knees through the weeds, which populated his garden as densely as the vine-yard, he set foot on the threshold of one of the two rooms comprising the ground-floor. At the sound there was a hubbub within. From the open doorway he could see rats scurrying helter-skelter and taking to cover under the filth that littered the entire floor. It was still the bed of the *lansquenets*. He glanced at the walls. The plaster was broken, and they were grimy with soot and bedaubed with foulness. He raised his eyes to the ceiling. It was tapestried with cobwebs. For the rest, it was bare.

He turned away again, tearing his hair with vexation, and retraced the path his own footsteps had made a moment before. After a few paces he took a short-cut leading off to the left through the fields, and without seeing or hearing a living soul, he came upon the house where he counted upon passing the night. It was already growing towards dusk. His friend was sitting on a bench at the doorway, his arms folded on his breast and his eyes raised to heaven in the attitude of a man dismayed by misfortune and succumbing to savagery under the stress of

solitude. Hearing footfalls, he turned towards the newcomer, and, addressing him who in the dim light and through the fronded boughs it seemed to be, "Is there no one but me?" he cried aloud, rising to his feet as he did so, and throwing up his hands. "Have I not done enough for today? Let me rest a moment, and you will be doing a work of mercy none the less."

Renzo, not knowing what such words might mean, called him by name in reply.

"Renzo!" burst from the other, half in exclamation, half in inquiry.

"The same," replied he. And they rushed together.

"'Tis really thou!" said his friend, when they were closer. "Oh, what a joy to see thee! Who would ever have thought it? I mistook thee for Paolino of the confraternity,[1] who is forever pestering me to come and dig graves. Knowest thou that I am left alone? alone! solitary as a hermit!"

"I know it to be only too true," said Renzo. And thus, exchanging greetings, interspersed with questions and replies, they entered the cottage together. Then, without interrupting their conversation, Renzo's host bestirred himself to provide such small entertainment as befitted the sudden emergency and the precarious times. He put water on to boil and began to stir up a hasty-pudding, but, abandoning the ladle to Renzo, he went out again, repeating to himself, "All alone! great Heaven! all alone!"

He returned with a small pail of milk, some dried meat, a pair of cheeses, and some figs and peaches. Depositing his load on the table and dishing up the pudding into a bowl, they sat down together, each thanking the other, the guest for such hospitality, the host for Renzo's visit. And, after an absence of maybe two years, they suddenly found themselves much better friends than they had ever suspected when they saw each other every day, because in the meantime, says our anonymous author, bitter experience had taught both of them the balm that kindness pours

[1] [One of those confraternities, like the Confraternita della Buona Morte, whose members bind themselves to look after the burial of the poor.—TRANSLATOR.]

into the soul—as well the kindness we show as the kindness we receive.

To be sure, no one could take the place of Agnese with Renzo, or console him for her absence, not only on account of their particular and long-standing friendship for each other, but also because she alone held the key to the puzzle he was so intent upon solving. He hesitated a moment between continuing his journey in search of the daughter and turning aside to find the mother, since she was so near. But, considering that she would know nothing of Lucia's health, he held to his original purpose of clearing up this doubt and hearing his sentence pronounced and then bearing the news to Agnese. His friend was able to tell him many things he had not known and straighten out much of his confusion in regard to Lucia's adventures, his own prosecution, and Don Rodrigo's ignominious absence—in fine, the whole crazy-work of complications which had developed. He also knew (and for Renzo it was knowledge of no slight importance) how to pronounce Don Ferrante's surname intelligibly. Agnese had had her amanuensis write it, it is true, but Heaven alone knows how it was spelled, and his Bergamask interpreter, in reading her letter, made such gibberish of it that, had Renzo gone to Milan with no other directions, he would most likely have met never a person to guess after whom he was inquiring. Still, that had been his sole clue to guide him in his search for Lucia. As for the law, he was able to satisfy himself still more that the danger it threatened was sufficiently remote to cause him no apprehension. The podestà had died of the plague, and God knew when another would be sent. Even the police had left for other parts—or the greater number of them, and those that remained had quite other things to occupy them than ancient history.

In turn, he recounted his own vicissitudes and was rewarded with a hundred tales about the invasion, the plague, the doings of anointers and such prodigies. "Gruesome matters," remarked Renzo's friend, as he conducted him to a chamber left untenanted by the epidemic; "things you and I would have sworn we should

never see, things to banish joy for the rest of one's life. Still 'tis a solace to speak of them to a friend."

Daybreak found them both in the kitchen, Renzo rigged for the road. His jerkin concealed the roll of money tucked in his belt. The dagger rested in a breeches pocket. But, in order to travel lighter, he left his bundle in safe keeping with his host. "If all goeth well," he said—"if I find her alive— Peace!— I shall pass this way again. From here then to Pasturo, to tell poor Agnese the good news; and then, and then— But if it be my misfortune,—a misfortune which God forbid,—then I know not what I shall do or whither I shall go. Certainly you will never see me again here." As he spoke thus, standing in the doorway with his head thrown back, he looked longingly, with a mixed feeling of tenderness and sadness, at his native dawn, which he had not seen for so long a time. His friend bade him be of good hope, as men are wont to do in such circumstances. He insisted on his taking something along to eat. He accompanied him a short distance and then left him with renewed good wishes.

Renzo walked leisurely. It sufficed for his purpose to reach the vicinity of Milan the same day. On the morrow he would enter the walls and begin his quest. The journey was uneventful. Nothing presented itself to distract Renzo's thoughts except the accustomed spectacles of misery and melancholy. As on the previous day, he halted in due course at a grove by the wayside to eat a mouthful of food and to rest. In passing by an open shop in Monza with bread on display, he bespoke two loaves, so as not to remain unprovided against any eventuality. The baker bade him not enter, but on a small peel, or paddle, he thrust forth a bowl containing vinegar and water, telling him to drop his money in. This being done, he handed him the loaves one after another with a pair of tongs. Renzo put one in each pocket.

Towards nightfall he arrived at Greco, without, however, knowing what place it was. But, relying on his impressions of his former trip and the calculated distance he had walked from Monza, he gathered that the city could not be far away and

accordingly struck off from the highroad to seek a harvesters' lodge in the fields. It was there he decided to pass the night rather than become embroiled with innkeepers. He fared better than he had reckoned. He came upon a break in the hedge which formed the enclosure of a barnyard. He entered cautiously. It was deserted. In one corner he descried a large penthouse sheltering a cock of hay and a ladder leading up to the mow. He glanced around and then mounted at random and prepared to sleep. Slumber overtook him instantly, and it was dawn before he awoke. Then, creeping on all fours to the edge of his enormous bed, he peeped out, and seeing no one, crawled down again and set off, taking as his polar star through the lanes by which he traveled the cathedral of Milan. After a very short walk he came out right under the city-wall, between East Gate and New Gate and quite close to the latter.

Chapter XXXIV

As to the manner in which he was to enter the city, Renzo had heard, in a general sort of way, that there were strict orders to admit none without certificates of health, but that in practice entrance was easy, did one but use his wits and choose the right moment. The facts were just as he had heard them represented. Leaving aside the general reasons for remissness at such a time in executing orders, as well as the special reasons that rendered difficult the rigid execution of this order in particular, Milan by this time found itself in such case as to see nothing to be gained by vigilance and nothing more to lose by neglect of it. And so the entrant seemed to be rather reckless of his own health than a menace to that of the citizens.

Taking his clue from these reports, Renzo planned to enter the city by the first gate he came across, and, if he there met with a rebuff, to continue along the outside of the walls until he should find easier access. Heaven alone knows how many gates he imagined Milan to have! Having reached the foot of the walls, therefore, he paused and looked about him, like a man who does not know which way to turn and in his perplexity accepts any object as his guide. But he saw nothing to right or left but a piece of crooked road, or in front of him but a blank wall. Nowhere was there a sign of human habitation, save that from a certain point of the rampart rose a column of dense black smoke that bellied out gradually into great globular clouds and then melted into the still grey morning air. It was clothing, bedding and other household furniture which were being burned—one of those melancholy bonfires that never died down, either at that point or at many another along the wall.

The day was close, the air muggy, the sky cloudy—or rather, overcast by a motionless veil of haze that appeared to intercept the sun without giving any promise of rain. The country about

was partly uncultivated and everywhere parched. Vegetation was all discolored, not a drop of dew on the drooping, withered leaves. This, together with the unwonted solitude and silence at the very edge of a large city, added consternation to Renzo's disquietude and made his thoughts more dismal than before.

After pausing for a time, he struck off to the right at random, going without knowing it in the direction of New Gate, which, though close by, he could not perceive on account of the bastion which then hid it from view. After a few steps he began to hear the tinkling of bells, which ceased and commenced again at intervals, and then human voices. He pushed on, and, having turned the corner of the bastion, he saw a sentry-box with the sentinel in the doorway leaning on his musket in an attitude of weariness and distraction. Farther on was a palisade, and behind this the city-gate—that is to say two mural abutments with an arch overhead to shelter the gates themselves, which stood wide open, as did the wicket of the palisade. For all that, the way was blocked by a melancholy obstacle. Right in front of the open portal stood a barrow, on which two *monatti* were depositing some unfortunate before carrying him off. It was the head tax-gatherer, who had developed the plague shortly before. Renzo stood, awaiting the end. The convoy having departed, and no one proceeding to close the wicket, he saw his chance and made towards it in haste. The guard dropped his passivity and threateningly challenged his passage. Renzo halted, and, fixing him with his eye, drew forth a half-ducat and showed it to him. Whether the sentinel had already had the plague, or whether he feared it less than he loved half-ducats, he motioned Renzo to fling it at his feet, and, seeing it immediately filliped towards him, bade our hero in a whisper advance quickly. Renzo did not wait for a second invitation. He passed through wicket and gate, and pressed on without any one seeing or heeding him save for a "Ho, there!" that a tax-gatherer halloed after him when he was perhaps forty paces away. This time he feigned not to hear, and without even looking back struck a livelier pace and made off. "Ho, there!" again cried the tax-gatherer, but in a tone that indicated rather peevishness than

a determination to make himself obeyed. Not being obeyed, he shrugged his shoulders and retired again into his hut, like a man who was much more concerned to keep travelers at a safe distance than to pry into their business.

The street which Renzo had chosen led then, as it does today, directly to the canal known as *Il Naviglio*. It was bordered by hedges or garden-walls, churches, monasteries and some few houses. At the top of this street and in the middle of the one flanking the canal there stood a column surmounted by a cross called the Cross of St. Eusebius. And, look ahead as much as he might, this cross was the only thing that Renzo could see. Arriving at the intersection which divides the street almost equally in two, and looking first to one side and then to another, he finally saw to the right a citizen approaching along what is called today the Boulevard of St. Theresa. "A Christian at last!" he muttered to himself, and turned towards the pedestrian, thinking to learn from him his directions. The latter had also seen the stranger approaching and eyed him from a distance with a look of suspicion, which deepened when he perceived that he was not going on about his business, but making ready for a meeting. On approaching nearer, Renzo doffed his bonnet, like the courteous mountaineer that he was, and, holding it in the left hand, while he thrust the other into the crown, he made straight for the unknown. The other drew back a step, his eyes now bursting from their sockets, and aimed the iron-shod point of a knotty staff directly for Renzo's waist, screaming as he said so, "Stand off! stand off! stand off!"

"For shame!" exclaimed the youth in his turn. He put his hat back again on his head, and, intent (as he used to explain when relating the occurrence in subsequent years) on quite other things than starting a broil, he turned his back on the fanatic and pursued his way—or rather, the way on which he found himself embarked.

The other also continued on, panting with excitement and casting a backward glance at every step. And, on reaching home, he related how he had been accosted by an anointer with an obsequious, humble air but the face of an infamous impostor,

holding his ointment-box or his powder-sack (he could not rightly say which it was) in the crown of his hat ready to work his scurvy tricks, had he not managed to make him keep his distance. "Had he advanced another step," he would add, "I would have spitted him out of hand, before he could have served me—the scoundrel. The pity is that we were in such a lonely place, for, had it been in mid-city, I would have summoned help to aid me in capturing him. Certain it is he held the villainous poison right here in his hat. But, alone as I was with him, I had to content myself with frightening him off without courting disaster. Because a pinch of powder is easily thrown, and they have an adroitness all their own, and the devil besides to stead them. Now he is abroad in Milan, and Heaven alone knows what scathe he will work." And as long as he lived, which was for many years, he would repeat this story whenever anointers were in question, and always end his recital with a challenge to the incredulous: "Let those who still maintain that such things did not happen not come to argue with me; it needs that one should have seen them with his own eyes."

Renzo, far from imagining what a narrow escape he had had, and animated more by anger than by fear, pondered on the encounter as he walked along and guessed the thoughts that had prompted such a reception accurately enough; but the thing appeared so unreasonable that he concluded the other had been some half-wit. "I begin ill," he ruminated. "An evil planet seems to hang over me here in Milan. Circumstances favor me in entering; and then, when I am in, trouble lieth in wait for me. Peace! With God's help—if I find—if I succeed in finding —Poh! this will be nothing."

On reaching the bridge he turned spontaneously to the left into St. Mark's Street, rightly conjecturing that it must lead to the centre of the town. He looked to the right and left as he went, to see if he could not discover a human being somewhere, but his eye lighted only on an unsightly corpse lying in the ditch that separates the few scattered houses (then fewer still) from the street along its outer reaches. Having passed by this straggling outskirt, he heard a voice calling: "Holla!

kind sir!" Turning in the direction of the sound, he saw standing on the balcony of an isolated house a poor woman, surrounded by a covey of small children, who was beckoning for him with her hand to reenforce her outcries. He hurried to the spot, and, when he had drawn nigh, "Kind youth," said the woman, "for the sake of your dear departed, mercifully go to the commissary and notify him that we have been forgotten out here. They have shut us up as suspect, because my husband died. They nailed the door as you see, and since yesterday morning no one hath brought us aught to eat. In all this time not a living soul hath appeared to do me this favor, and these poor innocents are dying of hunger."

"Of hunger!" exclaimed Renzo; and, thrusting his hands into his pockets, "Here! here!" he said, drawing forth the loaves. "Let down something that I may put them in."

"God reward thee. Wait one moment," said the woman, and went to look for a basket and a rope to lower it. Renzo, meanwhile, thought of the loaves he had found at the foot of the cross on his other visit to Milan, and, "Behold!" he said to himself, "this is restitution, and perhaps better than if I had returned them to the rightful owner, for this is a real work of mercy."

"As for the commissary you speak of, my good woman," he then continued, as he placed the loaves in the basket, "I can be of no use; because, truth to tell, I am a stranger and entirely unacquainted with this country. Still, if so be I meet with some one civil enough to listen, I shall tell him."

The woman begged him to do so, and told him the name of the street, that he might give the proper address.

"And thou, too," resumed Renzo, "I believe thou couldst do me a service—a real act of charity—without any inconvenience. Couldst thou direct me to the house of ———, a noble family, great aristocrats here in Milan?"

"I know only that there is such a house," replied his interlocutor; "but where, I could not say. As you go on your way, you will find some one to direct you. And remember to tell them of us."

"Never fear," quoth Renzo, and started off.

Every step he took magnified certain noises which had already reached his ear while he stood talking under the balcony: a rumbling of cartwheels, a clatter of hoofs, a tinkling of bells, and every now and then a cracking of whips accompanied by shouts. He looked ahead but saw nothing. On arriving at the end of the street and finding himself suddenly in St. Mark's Square, the first thing that confronted his gaze were two upright beams with a rope and pulleys attached. He was not long in identifying it (for it was something with which men were familiar in those days) as the abominable instrument of torture. It was erected there, and not only there but in every square and all the widest streets, in order that the functionaries of each district, furnished therefor with all kinds of arbitrary powers, might apply it immediately to whoever appeared to them worthy of punishment: confined persons who had broken quarantine, subalterns who had neglected their duties or any other delinquents. It was one of those extreme and ineffectual remedies of which the law at that time, and in those moments more particularly, was so prodigal.

While Renzo stood looking at the rack, wondering why it had been erected at such a spot, he heard the noise draw ever nearer, and then a man appeared around the corner of the church ringing a bell. It was an apparitor. Behind him he perceived two horses, straining at their collars and digging their hoofs into the ground, as they advanced with painful effort. The burden that taxed them so then hove into view. It was a tumbril full of dead bodies. After that came another, then another, then a fourth, with *monatti* walking to the right and left of the horses, urging them on by whipping, by prodding and by cursing. The corpses, for the greater part nude and some poorly clothed with rags, were piled up and intertwined like a bunch of snakes slowly uncoiling with the first warmth of spring; because at every jar and jolt of the tumbril one saw the grisly mass quiver and squirm, heads dangle, virginal tresses dishevelled, arms slide out and flap helplessly against the wheels

—illustrating to the already horrified gaze of the spectator how such a sight can become still more ghastly and excruciating.

The youth had halted at the corner of the square near the parapet of the canal, and was praying silently for the unknown dead. A horrid thought flashed across his mind: "What if there, there at the bottom of that—O God! let it not be so! let me not think of it!"

The cavalcade having passed, Renzo resumed his way, crossing the square and turning to his left along the canal for no other reason than that the death-train had taken the opposite direction. After three or four paces, which intervened between the side of the church and the canal, he perceived off to his right the Marcellino Bridge. He crossed and came out into the Borgo Nuovo. Looking up the street, always with a view to finding some one to point out the way, he saw in the distance a priest clad in doublet and hose, leaning on his cane at a partly opened door, his head bowed and his ears against the crack. Presently he saw him raise his hand in blessing, and he rightly conjectured that he had just finished hearing some one's confession. "This is my man," he said to himself. "If a priest in the very exercise of his priesthood hath not a little charity, a little kindness and civility, there is none left in the world."

The priest, meanwhile, having left the doorway, was coming in Renzo's direction, walking with much circumspection in the middle of the street. Renzo doffed his hat, when the other had come up, and indicated his desire to speak, halting at the same time, to intimate that he would not draw nearer. The priest halted likewise with the air of lending an ear, planting his cane before him as though to entrench himself behind a bulwark. Renzo formulated his inquiry, which the priest satisfied not only by naming the street in which the house was situated but also by a little lesson in topography, of which he saw the poor lad had sore need; indicating, that is, by dint of "rights" and "lefts," of churches and crosses, the six or eight streets he had still to traverse.

"God keep thee hale through these times and always," said Renzo; and, as the other was starting away, "Another favor,"

he added, continuing to describe the plight of the poor forsaken woman in the outskirts. The good clergyman thanked him for the opportunity of attending to a charity so pressing, and, promising to notify the proper authority, passed on. Renzo also started on his way, and, as he trudged along, tried to repeat his itinerary, so as not to have to make inquiries at every street-corner. But it is almost incredible how arduous the exercise proved to be, not so much on account of its intrinsic difficulties as of the agitation that now arose in his mind. That naming of the street and tracing his way had upset his equilibrium entirely. It was the direction he had wanted and requested and which was indispensable in his search. Naught had been said on which he could base sinister auguries. But, so it is, this very proximity of the juncture which would end his great uncertainty and in which the words "She is alive" or "She is dead" might be pronounced, so oppressed his imagination that in that moment he would have wished himself in complete darkness and his journey to be beginning instead of verging on its end. He rallied his strength, however, and took himself silently to task. "Bah!" he soliloquized. "If we start now to play the baby, what will be the outcome?" Thus fortified, he pursued his path towards the centre of the city.

What a city! And how trifling in comparison the wretchedness to which it had been reduced a year ago by the famine!

Renzo chanced to pass through a quarter which happened to be precisely one of the most squalid and desolate in all Milan—the hub of streets which was called the Carrobio of New Gate. (A cross then stood in the centre and, facing it, next to what is now the Church of St. Francis of Paola, an old church dedicated to St. Anastasia.) Such had been the violence of the epidemic in that vicinity and the stench of dead bodies left there to rot that the few survivors had been compelled to emigrate; so that the melancholy which the passer-by felt at the loneliness and abandonment of his surroundings was intensified by the fetid effluvia of recent habitation. Renzo quickened his pace, heartening himself with the reflection that his goal could not be very close to this charnel-house, and hoping that the

scene would change somewhat before his route was covered. In fact, it was not long before he emerged into what might be termed a city of the living. But what a city it was still, and what apologies for living beings! Every entrance was barred, either from suspicion or fear, save where wide-open doors indicated that the house had lost its inhabitants or had been broken into by looters. Some were nailed shut and sealed. There the tenants were either sick or dead of the plague. On still others a cross drawn with charcoal announced to the *monatti* that there were dead bodies to be removed.

And all this, be it remembered, was governed at haphazard by the chance that the commissary of a particular district chose to do his duty or to indulge in tyranny. The ground was everywhere littered with rags and, what was still more revolting, with pus-stained linens, infected bed-straw and filthy sheets thrown from the windows. Here and there one stumbled over corpses, either of persons who had suddenly fallen dead in the street and were waiting for the next dead-cart to come along and pick them up, or dropped by the last cart that had passed, or—so thoroughly had the persistence of disaster brutalized minds and extinguished the solicitude of natural piety and the decencies of social life—thrown out unfeelingly from an upper chamber. In the absence of all sounds of commerce, all clatter of passing vehicles, cries of venders and conversations of passers by, it was seldom that the stillness of death was broken by aught else than the rumbling of dead-carts, the lamentations of the poor, the groans of the sick, the screams of the delirious or the shouts of *monatti*. At daybreak, at noon and again at nightfall the cathedral-bell gave the signal for the recitation of prayers prescribed by the archbishop. Its tolling was answered by the other church-bells of the city. Then one might have seen the inhabitants of a street appear at the windows and mingle their prayers together, and in the subdued chorus of sighs and supplication one detected beneath all the sadness a note of something like comfort.

Two-thirds of the inhabitants having by that time died of the plague, a good proportion of the remainder having fled or else

being bedfast, and the influx from without being reduced to almost nothing, one might have walked a whole day without meeting one of the few who still frequented the streets who did not betray something queer or indicative of the dire changes that had overtaken him. The most prominent citizens might be seen without cloak or mantle—at that day the most indispensable features of civilian dress. Priests went without the cassock, and even religious laid aside their habits for a doublet. Every article of clothing, in fact, was discontinued which might brush against any object with its folds or (what was feared above all else) might offer opportunities to the anointer. And, over and above this care to retrench in dress to the last degree, there supervened a general neglect and slovenliness of the person, the beards of such as were wont to wear them growing unkempt, and cheeks becoming daily shaggier that formerly were shaven clean. The hair, too, was allowed to run wild into elf-locks, not only through the indifference which is bred by protracted despondency, but in consequence of the suspicion that attached to the barbers' profession ever since one of them was arrested and condemned as a notorious anointer. This was Giangiacomo Mora—a name which obloquy long kept alive in municipal traditions, but which pity instead should in justice have consigned to a longer and more widespread immortality.

The great majority carried in one hand a staff, or even a pistol, as a warning against approaching too closely; and, in the other, smelling salts, or else metal or wooden bulbs containing sponges soaked in medicated bitters, which they held to their nose from time to time or even continually. Some wore on their breasts lockets filled with quicksilver in the belief that it absorbed and retained every kind of pestilential miasma, and they were careful to renew it every so often. Nobles could be seen not only going without their accustomed retinues, but even carrying baskets and doing their own marketing. When friends could not choose but meet each other on the street, they saluted silently from a distance and hurried on. Pedestrians of every kind had much ado to avoid the disgusting and death-breeding impediments that littered their way, and sometimes blocked it

completely. Every one sought to keep the middle of the street for fear of the filth or more horrid burdens still that might descend from the windows, of the infectious powders that were said to be frequently scattered thence on passers by, and finally, for fear of the walls, which might be anointed. Thus ignorance, with courage and caution misplaced, now multiplied its troubles and conjured up false terrors, to compensate for the reasonable and salutary fears it had discarded in the beginning.

Such was the least revolting and pitiful side of the picture, that of the hale and well-to-do; because, after all the scenes of wretchedness through which we have conducted the reader and out of consideration for those he has yet to encounter, we shall not now pause to portray the plague-stricken, who dragged themselves about the streets or lay in the gutters, or the poor, or the children, or the women. It was such a spectacle that the actual beholder might find desperate comfort in the consideration—which moves posterity most powerfully and most painfully—that the survivors were so few.

Amid this desolation Renzo had already traveled a good part of his journey, when, at the distance of only a few paces from a street into which he had to turn, he heard proceeding thence a heterogeneous din, in which he could distinguish the familiar tinkling of that horrid bell.

On reaching the corner of the street, which was one of the widest, he saw four dead-carts standing in the middle, and as in a grain-market one sees people rushing hither and thither, filling sacks or dumping out their contents, so here he perceived *monatti* going into houses and *monatti* coming out with burdens that they deposited in one or another of the carts, some in their red uniforms, others without that distinguishing badge, and many wearing more hateful insignia still—plumes and cockades, which these depraved beings displayed as a sign of mirth amid the general mourning. "Here, monatti!" came in lugubrious tones from now one, now another of the windows. And in more sinister accents still a raucous voice replied from amidst the ghastly hubbub, "Coming, coming." Or else inmates were

grumbling and making pleas for more haste; which the *monatti* would answer with curses.

On entering the street, Renzo quickened his pace, trying to see nothing more of these encumbrances than was necessary to eschew them, when his glance chanced to fall on an unwonted object of pity—so unwonted that it beguiled him into looking, and he paused almost unconsciously.

Descending from one of these thresholds and coming towards the dead-carts, he saw a woman whose features announced a youthfulness on the wane but not yet fled and exhibited a beauty that anguish and mortal weakness had dimmed and overcast but not obliterated—that beauty at once soft and majestic that scintillates in the Lombardese blood. She walked with an effort, but there was no drooping of the figure. Her eyes were dry, though they bore traces of copious weeping. In fact, there was something unspeakably subdued and profound in her grief that denoted a mind which had weighed its loss and presented its whole consciousness unflinchingly to the full force of the pang. But it was not her aspect alone that marked her off as an object of special pity amid the surrounding misery and revived in her own regard a sentiment that had grown dull and benumbed in the heart of men. She bore in her arms a little girl of perhaps nine years—dead, but without a single note to betray it in her appearance, with her hair parted carefully on her forehead and her dress of dazzling white, as if she had been arrayed by those same hands for a long-promised feast as a reward for some childish excellence. She held her, not like a dead weight across her arm, but folded to her breast as though she were alive. And so, indeed, she would have appeared to be, were it not for a small hand of the whiteness of wax hanging limply from one side with the inertness of death, and the head resting on the mother's shoulder—mother's, I say, because, even though the similarity of the features had not proclaimed the fact, it would have been vouched for sufficiently by the sentiment one saw depicted on the countenance of the living.

A filthy *monatto* advanced to take the child from her arms, but with a kind of unwonted reverence and an instinctive hesita-

tion. "No!" said the mother, drawing back, but manifesting no sign of indignation or contempt—"no! touch her not now. Mine must be the hand to lay her here. Take this." So saying, she dropped a purse into the upraised palm of the other. Then, "Promise me," she continued, "not to remove a stitch of her garments, nor to let any one else do so, but to bury her even as she is now."

The *monatto* put his hand to his breast, and with a solicitude, and almost obsequiousness, produced rather by the strange new sentiment that subdued him than by the unexpected guerdon, proceeded busily to make room for the corpse on the tumbril. The mother, pressing a kiss on the forehead, placed the child thereon as though she were putting her to bed, tucked in her garments and covered her with a white pall. Then, "Adieu! Cecilia," she said in conclusion; "rest in peace. This evening we too shall come to thee to part no more. Pray thou in the meantime for us, as I shall pray for thee and for the others." Then, turning once more to the *monatto,* "Come for me," she said, "as you pass by this afternoon, and mine will not be the only corpse that will be awaiting you."

So saying, she reentered the house and a moment later appeared at the window with another smaller child at her breast, alive as yet, but with the signs of death already on it. She remained looking at these unworthy obsequies of her elder child until the cart started off, and followed it with her eyes until it finally disappeared from view. What else was there for her to do now but to place her only remaining love on the bed and lie down beside it and die together?—as the full-blown flower and the bud fall simultaneously under the scythe that levels all in its swath without distinction.

"God in heaven!" exclaimed Renzo, "hear her prayer; take her to Thyself—her and her innocent fledgling. They have suffered enough! they have suffered enough!"

His self-control returned after the stress of these extraordinary emotions, and, while he sought to reconstruct mentally his itinerary so far as to decide whether he should turn at the next street, and if so, whether to the right or left, he heard voices

of a different order coming from that direction—a confused sound of imperious shouts and weak remonstrances, the weeping of women and the whimpering of children.

He forged ahead, those same obscure premonitions of woe weighing on his heart. On reaching the cross-street he saw a confused multitude coming forward and paused for them to pass. They were invalids being led to the *lazaretto*. Some, driven thither by force, were offering a vain resistance, crying that they wished to die in their beds and retorting with unavailing imprecations the oaths and commands of the *monatti* who led them. Others walked along in silence without manifesting grief or any other emotion, as if insensate. There were not wanting women with babes at their breasts, and frightened children,—frightened more at the shouting and the hubbub than at the vague thought of death,—who were crying loudly for their mothers and their homes. Ah! perhaps that mother whom they thought to have left asleep on her bed had fallen there, suddenly prostrated by the plague, and lay now unconscious, waiting to be carried to the *lazaretto* in the ambulance, or to the cemetery if the ambulance was slow in coming. Or perhaps (a tragedy deserving of still bitterer tears!) the mother had forgotten everything, even her children, in the importunateness of her own suffering, and had no other concern than to die in peace. Still, amid the confusion, one also saw instances of constancy and natural piety: fathers, mothers, brothers, children, spouses, supporting their dear ones on their way and cheering them with words of comfort. Nor was it adults alone who did so, but children, small boys and girls leading their younger brothers by the hand, exhorting them with the prudence and compassion of grown-ups to be obedient and assuring them that they were going where they would be cared for and cured.

Amid these touching and melancholy sights there was something else that lacerated our traveler's heart still more and kept it in trepidation. The house must be near by, and Heaven knows whether in that mob——! But, the procession having passed and this doubt along with it, he turned to a *monatto* bringing up the rear, and inquired about the street and Don

Ferrante's house. "The foul fiend seize thee, thou bumpkin!" was the only answer he elicited. Nor did he bother to give the churl what he deserved; but, seeing a few paces off a commissary following in the wake who had something more the air of a Christian, he put to him the same query. The latter, pointing with his staff in the direction whence they had come, merely said: "The first street to the right, and then the last big house to your left."

The youth bent his steps in the direction indicated, and, once in the street, quickly distinguished the house from its lower and poorer neighbors. He approached the door, which was closed, and, grasping the knocker, held it suspended, like one hesitating to draw from an urn the die which means life or death. At last he raised it and gave a resolute knock.

After some moments a window opened and out came a woman's head, looking to see who was there with a suspicious glance that seemed to demand: "What now? *Monatti* is it? Or tramps, maybe? Or Commissaries? Or anointers? Or devils?"

"Fair lady," stammered Renzo, looking up, "is there a country lass in service here named Lucia?"

"She's here no longer. Be off," replied the woman, starting to close the window.

"One moment, I adjure thee. No longer here? Where is she?"

"In the *lazaretto*." And again she made up to close the window.

"But a moment, in Heaven's name! With the plague?"

"What else? Is it a new thing? Be off."

"Ah! woe's me! Hold; was she sick long? How long since——?"

But this time the window was closed in earnest.

"Kind lady! kind lady! one word, I beseech thee in the name of thy dear departed! I ask nothing that will make thee poorer. Hold!" But it was like talking to the wall.

In sore affliction at the news he had heard and in anger at the manner in which it was conveyed, Renzo again seized the knocker, and, leaning thus against the door, went on squeezing

and twisting it, and, raising it to knock once again with a will, he held it suspended as before. In this state of agitation, he turned to see if there might not be some one else in the neighborhood from whom he could extract more precise information, some ray of light, some clue to guide him. But the first and the only person he descried was another woman about twenty paces away, who, what with the expression of mingled terror, hate, impatience and malignity on her face, her wide-staring eyes that would fain look down the street without leaving him, her mouth gaping to scream at the pitch of her voice but breathless with fright, her gaunt arms upraised, and her wrinkled and claw-like hands opening and closing as if to grasp something, was obviously intent on summoning help without attracting his attention. When their eyes met, she started like a thief caught in the act and became more frenzied still.

"What the de'il——?" Renzo began, as he brandished his fists at the woman in turn; but she, losing all hope of taking him by surprise, let loose the scream she had so far repressed. "The anointer! Seize him! seize him! seize the anointer!"

"Who? I! Hah! thou lying witch! Hold thy tongue!" shouted Renzo, making a bound in her direction to frighten her into silence. But he at once perceived that he had more need of looking to himself. At the woman's shrill cry people came flocking from right and left, not the crowd that would have gathered at such a summons three months before, but still enough to do their will upon a single individual. At the same time the window opened and the hag this time thrust out her head and shouted: "Seize him! seize him! He's one of the scoundrels who go about anointing honest folk's doors."

Renzo paused not to argue. His best course seemed to be to flee, rather than stand his ground and explain. He looked right and left, and broke through the circle where it was thinnest. He shoved aside a man who blocked his way, and, with a punch in the chest of another who was coming at him, he sent him reeling back eight or ten paces, and off he sped, clenching his gnarled fist aloft in readiness for whoever else would cross his path. The street ahead was empty, but behind him he could

hear the footfalls of his pursuers, and still louder than their footfalls the odious cry of "Stop him! stop him! stop the anointer!" He knew not how long they would give chase; he saw no refuge. His anger turned to rage, his anguish to desperation, and, becoming blind to all about him, he unsheathed his knife, and, turning suddenly round with the most savage scowl his face had ever worn, he brandished the gleaming blade aloft and cried: "Come forward who dares, ye riffraff, and I'll anoint him in earnest with this."

He saw, to his surprise and consolation, that his pursuers had also halted and stood hesitating, and that, without ceasing their outcries, they were beckoning like mad to a party in his rear. He turned again, and saw (what his frantic excitement had prevented him from seeing before) a dead-cart, or rather, a train of dead-carts, advancing with their usual escort, and behind them another group, who would also fain swoop down on the anointer and catch him between them. But they, too, were withheld by the same deterrent. Seeing himself thus between two fires, it occurred to him that their terror might be his salvation. It was no time for fastidiousness. Replacing his knife, he drew back a step and made a bee-line for the carts, passed the first, and spied in the second a good space still unoccupied. He measured the distance with his eye, made a spring and landed safely on his right foot, with his left out and his arms raised to balance him.

"Bravo! bravo!" exclaimed in chorus the *monatti,* some of whom were following the convoy on foot, some of whom were seated in the carts, while others, to tell the brutal truth, made benches of the dead bodies, drinking all in turn from a bottle that passed from hand to hand. "Bravo! well leaped."

"You come to invoke the protection of the *monatti;* count yourself as safe as in the church," said to him one of those on the cart he had mounted.

His enemies fell back for the most part at the approach of the convoy and went their ways, without ceasing their cries of "Seize him! Anointers! anointers!" Some retired more slowly, stopping every now and then and turning on Renzo with menac-

ing gestures and scowls. He answered them in kind from the cart, brandishing his fist in defiance.

"Let me serve them," said one of the *monatti.* He tore a loathsome rag from one of the corpses, tied it hurriedly into a knot, and taking it by one corner, swung it around like a slung-shot and pretended to hurl it at these loiterers, crying: "Wait now, ye riffraff." At this feint they fled in horror, and Renzo saw no more of his adversaries than their broad backs and their flying heels pounding away like the hammers in a fulling-mill.

This was greeted with a yell of triumph, noisy peals of laughter and prolonged booing by the *monatti,* as if to form an accompaniment to the retreat.

"Aha! See now whether we do not protect honest men," said one of the *monatti* to Renzo. "One of us is worth more than a hundred such cowards."

"'Tis true, I can say I owe my life to you," Renzo replied, "and I thank you with all my heart."

"And wherefore?" continued the *monatti.* "You deserve as much; you're the right kind. You do well to anoint the vermin. Anoint them all, exterminate them; they're worth naught till they're dead—the scoundrels. They curse us in return for spending our lives in this fashion and prate that they will hang us all when the plague is over. They'll come to an end before the plague, and the *monatti* will be the only ones left to chant pæans and live off the fat of the land."

"Long live the plague, and death to the rabble!" exclaimed another. And with this beautiful toast, he applied the bottle to his lips and clung to it, while the cart swayed and bounced, then passed it to Renzo, saying: "Drink to our health."

"Good health to you with all my heart," quoth Renzo; "but I am not thirsty—I have not the least hankering for drink just now."

"You were scared out of your wits, I do believe," said the *monatto.* "You're the milk-and-water kind after all, to my mind. Anointers wear no such sheep look."

"Every one to his own calling," said another.

"Give it here," said one of those who followed on foot. "I

would fain drink another swallow to the health of its owner that you see lying there with his jolly bed-fellows. There he is in that grand coach ahead."

And with a horrid guffaw, he pointed to the cart preceding that in which poor Renzo was a passenger. Then, composing his features to an expression of seriousness still more incongruous and impudent, he made a reverence in the direction of the corpse, and resumed: "Do not grudge a poor *monatto,* mine honorable host, sampling the wares of thy cellar. You see what a killing life we lead—we who ensconced you so snugly in your coach and are driving you to your country-seat. And besides, wine flusters your lordships so soon, and the poor *monatti* have good stomachs."

And amid the laughter of his companions he raised the flask to his lips, but, before drinking, he turned to Renzo, and, fixing him with his eyes, he arraigned him with a certain air of contemptuous pity: "The devil to whom you indentured yourself must needs be very young, for, had we not been by, it's fine help you would have got from him." And amid fresh peals of laughter he began to drink.

"What of us, there? what of us?" bawled out several voices from the cart ahead. Gulping down as much as he could, the rascal handed the bottle to his fellows, who passed it from one to another, until the last of them, after draining its contents, laid about him with it as with a flail and then dashed it against the cobble-stones, shouting: "Long live the plague!" As a sequel of this pious aspiration he intoned one of their scurrilous songs, and at once the whole vile chorus joined in. The infernal refrain, mingled with the tinkling of bells, the rumbling of carts and the tramp of feet, boomed hollowly along the silent streets, and, reverberating through the houses along the route, wrung the hearts of their few remaining inhabitants with anguish.

But 'tis an ill wind that blows no one good. His danger of a moment before had rendered the company of both corpses and ghouls more than tolerable to Renzo; and now his ears found almost delight in music that rid him of the embarrassment of holding further conversation. Still half choking and all at sea,

he went on silently thanking Providence as best he might for being clear of his perils without having received harm or inflicted it, and prayed now to be rid also of his liberators. With one eye on them and one on the streets through which he was passing, he waited, on the alert for an opportunity to step down without provoking them to make an outcry or scene and envenom other pedestrians against him.

Suddenly, on turning a corner, he seemed to recognize his whereabouts. He looked more closely and was certain. And where was he? On that same street leading to the East Gate along which he had loitered so leisurely and returned in such haste twenty months before. He recollected at once that it led directly to the *lazaretto;* and this coincidence of finding himself on the right way without any forethought or inquiries struck him as a special mark of Providence and a good omen for the future. At that juncture a commissary came up shouting to the *monatti* to stop and continuing on boisterously about one thing or another, and the music changed to a noisy diatribe. One of the *monatti* on Renzo's cart jumped down. "Thank you for your goodness, and may God reward you!" said Renzo to the other, and jumped down in turn.

"Go thy ways, poor young anointer," replied he; "Milan will survive for all thee."

Fortunately there was no one to overhear. The convoy had halted to the left of the street. Renzo hurried off along the other side, and, keeping in the shadow of the walls, hastened towards the bridge and continued along the same street until he recognized the Capuchin monastery and passed by its gate. From there the corner of the *lazaretto* was visible. Issuing from the East Gate by an open wicket, he saw the outer walls and surroundings of the enclosure spread out before him—hardly an index or foretaste of what was within, and still a vast and indescribable scene of manifold wretchedness.

The street, along the two sides which present themselves at that point to the eye of a spectator, was swarming with people: plague-stricken coming in troops to the *lazaretto,* or patients sprawling along the banks of the encircling moat, either be-

cause their strength was not sufficient to carry them within the asylum itself, or because, having left in desperation, their strength was equally lacking to continue on any farther. Other poor wretches wandered about singly in a stupor or downright delirium. One was fervidly describing his hallucinations to a prostrate companion in the throes of the disease, another was wildly raving, another looked to the right and left with a smiling countenance as though witnessing a cheerful spectacle. But what capped the climax of this melancholy hilarity was a loud and uninterrupted singing, which, while it did not seem to proceed from the midst of the miserable rabble itself, was still heard above everything else—a rustic love-song in a gay and playful strain belonging to the class of musical compositions called *villanelle*. Following with his eyes in the direction of the sound to discover who could be so cheerful at such a time and in such a place, Renzo saw a poor, crazed fellow sitting tranquilly in the bottom of the ditch and singing, with his head thrown back, at the pitch of his voice.

Hardly had he advanced a half-dozen paces along the south side of the edifice when he heard an extraordinary disturbance among the colony of outcasts and voices crying in the distance: "Look out! Stop him!" He stood on tiptoe, and could thus descry a sorry-looking jade galloping away wildly, and sitting astride its back a still sorrier-looking horseman. It was a delirious patient, who, seeing the beast standing loose and unwatched beside a cart, had suddenly mounted bareback, and, by dint of pounding with his fists and spurring with his heels, was driving off like mad, with *monatti* hallooing after and a cloud of dust enveloping them all like a mantle.

Thus, already tired and dismayed at the sight of misery, the youth arrived at the doors of a place which contained more of it, perhaps, than all the rest of the city that he had already traversed. He looked through the doorway, entered under the arch and stood motionless a moment in the middle of the portico.

Chapter XXXV

The reader is left to imagine, if he can, the interior of a pesthouse populated by sixteen thousand patients: the jumble of cabins and sheds, of carts and human beings, that cluttered up the whole space; the two endless arcades to right and left filled to overflowing with a confused multitude of the sick and the dead lying on mattresses or bare straw; the buzz in the air, rising and falling over this immense sty like the surf on the beach; the occasional flitting hither and thither of an attendant, a convalescent or a victim of delirium, stopping to bend down over a pallet or rushing off again on his tortuous way through the labyrinth. Such was the spectacle that filled Renzo's whole field of vision and held him rooted to the spot, appalled. It is a spectacle which we certainly do not propose to describe in detail, nor would the reader desire us to do so. But, as we follow our young friend on his distressing rounds, we shall stop when he stops and tell as much of the sights that struck him as may be necessary to explain his actions and their sequel.

Reaching from the gate where he stood to the chapel in the centre and from there again to the opposite gate of the enclosure, he saw a broad thoroughfare entirely unobstructed by cabins or other permanent impediments, and at second glance he noticed a prodigious bustle of carts lugging away rubbish to clear the passage. Capuchins and laymen were superintending the operations, and, incidentally, ordering off such as had no business there. Fearing to be ejected himself in like wise, he straightway plunged among the cabins on the right, in which direction he had chanced to turn.

He pushed on from cabin to cabin accordingly as he could find a footing, thrusting in his head at each one and surveying the beds arranged in the open air, peering into faces haggard with suffering or distorted with convulsions or motionless in

death, and fearing at any moment to discover the one which he still longed to find. But he had already made a good deal of progress and sorrowfully examined face after face, and as yet had found no sign of a woman. Hence he imagined they must be in a place by themselves. He cudgelled his wits, but he could not reason it out, nor was there any clue to guide him. From time to time he met attendants—as different in bearing, demeanor and dress as the motives that led them thither and gave them strength to live amid such duties—in some an entire absence of sensibility, in others a superhuman compassion. But neither from the one nor the other did he trust himself to seek information for fear of raising difficulties, and he concluded to press on until he found himself among women. But he did not neglect his observations as he went. Only, at times he was fain to avert his gaze, wearied, and almost dazzled, as it were, by the sight of so much suffering. But whither was he to turn it, or where let it rest, except on more suffering?

The very air and the sky overhead intensified, if that was possible, the horror of such sights. The mist had gradually thickened and agglomerated into clouds, which grew blacker and blacker and would have given one the impression of the lowering evening sky that presages a tempestuous night but for the pale disk of sun near the meridian showing through the deep storm-wracks as though through a thick veil and emitting a dead, suffocating heat without diffusing around more than a wan and sallow twilight. Every once in a while, amidst the continuous hum of this confused multitude, there was heard a dèep ominous muttering—inchoate, undecided, dying away before the listener could say from which direction it came or decide whether it was not a distant rumbling of carts coming to an abrupt stop. Not a leaf stirred on the trees outside. Not a bird was to be seen on the wing, except only a swallow, suddenly appearing over the roof of the enclosure and gliding down on outstretched pinions as if to skim along the ground, but which, taking fright at the noise, rapidly soared aloft again and flew away. At such a time traveling-companions are wont to trudge along together without one of them breaking the silence, the huntsman walks with eyes

bent on the ground, lost in thought, and the peasant lass ceases singing unawares at her work in the field—one of those times before a storm, when nature, calm outwardly but inwardly in travail, seems to oppress each living thing and impart some undefined difficulty to every exertion, to idleness itself, even to bare existence. But in that abode of suffering and death, where men were already at grips with misfortune, they were seen to succumb helplessly to this fresh oppression. Hundreds and hundreds took a sudden turn for the worse. Those in their last agony gasped still harder, as the fresh access of pain stifled their groans. It was, perhaps, the cruelest hour that had ever passed over this place of affliction.

The youth had already advanced a good distance on his fruitless journey in this labyrinth of cabins, when, on approaching a splintered, loosely joined palisade, he could begin to distinguish, amid the confused buzz and the medley of lamentations, a singular mingling of infants' cries and the bleating of animals proceeding from the other side of the partition. He applied his eye to a large crack between two palings and discovered an enclosure, dotted likewise with sheds and cabins and populated, not with ordinary invalids, but with infants, lying upon mattresses, pillows, sheets or quilts, and busily attended by wet-nurses and serving-women. But what most caught his eye and held it were the she-goats that were scattered about among the missionaries of mercy and shared their ministrations. It was, in fact, a foundling-home, such as the time and place permitted. And it was curious to see how quietly these animals would stand over now one, now another of the infants and give them suck, or run at the sound of weeping with almost a maternal instinct and put themselves in position over their charge and bleat and fuss, as if invoking aid for foster-children and themselves.

Nurses were sitting about with infants at their breasts; some of them in such loving wise that a spectator might doubt whether they had been attracted to the work by mere wages or by that spontaneous charity which goes in quest of distress and suffering. One of them, in great grief, removed a little weeping wretch from her exhausted breasts, and went sadly to seek assistance

from one of her dumb allies. Another gazed fondly at the creature asleep on her bosom, and, kissing it softly, went into a cabin to lay it on a mattress. A third permitted the little stranger to make its own of her maternal milk, but her eyes were raised to heaven and her face wore a look, not of inattention, but of abstraction. Of what else could she be thinking, in such an attitude and with such hunger in her eyes, but of some child of her own bosom that had sucked there—possibly died there—a little while before? Older women attended to other duties. One ran at the cries of a hungry infant and presented it to the teats of a she-goat that was feeding at a little heap of green grass, scolding the inexperienced animal, and caressing it at the same time, that it might render its services gently. One hurried to the rescue of a hapless tot that had been accidentally trampled by a goat while it was feeding another. One was dandling her charge, crooning to it, seeking now to lull it to sleep with song, now to soothe it with endearing words, and calling it by the name she herself had bestowed. At this juncture a white-bearded Capuchin arrived with two screaming babes, one in either arm, that he had just picked up from the side of their deceased mothers. A woman hastened to take them from him, and then stood looking about from women to goats for a foster-mother.

More than once the youth, impelled by his chief and over-powering thought, had left his observing-post to move away, then put his eye again to the vent, and looked for still one instant more.

He tore himself away at length and went skirting along the palisade, until a group of huts built against it compelled him to turn. He then followed the line of huts, intending to regain the palisade later on and follow it to the end, where he would take his bearings anew. As he was looking ahead and studying his course, a sudden apparition stalked, or flashed, across his vision and set his mind in a ferment. A hundred paces away he saw a Capuchin plunge among the cabins and disappear—a Capuchin, who, even at that distance and at such a fleeting glance, displayed the form, the bearing and the gait of Father

Cristoforo to a tittle. In such a frenzy as may be imagined he ran in his direction, and by dint of many twists and turns, in and out, forward and backward, through the labyrinth, he at length, with joy in turn equal to his first excitement, laid his eyes again on the familiar figure. He was now but a short distance off. Renzo saw him turn away from a great kettle suspended over a fireplace hard by and make his way, porringer in hand, towards one of the cabins. There he sat on the doorstep, and, first making the sign of the cross over the extended porringer, proceeded to eat, looking ceaselessly to right and left, like one whose vigilance knows no recess. It was Father Cristoforo in very truth.

His history, from the point where we lost him from sight, can be briefly told. He had never been changed from Rimini, nor asked to be changed, until the appearance of the plague at Milan offered him the opportunity he had always desired of giving his life for his fellow-man. He begged insistently to be sent thither to wait on the plague-stricken. Don Rodrigo's uncle, the count, was now dead; and besides, there was more need of nurses than of statesmen. So his request was granted without difficulty. He proceeded at once to Milan, entered the *lazaretto,* and had now been there for about three months.

But Renzo's consolation in finding the good friar once more was not an unmixed joy even for one instant. In the very act of recognizing him positively, he was forced to perceive the change that had come over him. His shoulders were stooped, his feet dragged, his face was thin and pale as death. Everything about him proclaimed the exhaustion of nature, the broken strength, the collapsing body that held itself together only by a continual effort of the will.

His regard, in turn, was fastened on the youth who was advancing towards him and trying by signs, since by word he did not dare, to make himself recognized. "Oh, Father Cristoforo!" he at length exclaimed, when he was near enough to be heard without raising his voice.

"Thou here!" said the friar, setting down his porringer and rising to his feet.

"And thou, father? How art thou?"

"Better than many of the wretches thou seest about thee," replied the religious; and his voice was husky, hollow—changed like the man himself. Only the eye remained the same, or even more animated and radiant; as though the spirit of love, become more sublimated towards the end of its task and exulting to be so near its goal, had enkindled there a brighter and purer flame than the one his increasing weakness was gradually extinguishing.

"But thou," he continued, "what bringeth thee hither? Why dost thou come thus braving the pestilence?"

"I have had it, thank Heaven. I come seeking tidings of—Lucia."

"Lucia! Is Lucia here?"

"She is; at least I hope in God she still is."

"Is she thy wife?"

"Oh, father, no; she is not my wife. Knowest thou nothing of what hath befallen us?"

"No, my son. Since God took me away from you I have heard nothing. But now that He sendeth thee to me, I tell thee frankly that I desire mightily to know more. But—the ban on thee?"

"Thou knowest, then, all they did to me?"

"But thou? what didst thou?"

"Hark! If I said I was prudent that day in Milan, I would lie. But as for crime, I committed not the slightest."

"I believe it; and so I believed from the first."

"Now, then, I can tell thee all."

"Hold," said the monk; and, going a few steps outside of the cabin, he called: "Father Vittore." After some moments a young Capuchin appeared, to whom he addressed himself. "Of your charity, Father Vittore," he said, "watch my sick with thine while I am absent; and call if any one wants me—the one you know of, above all! Should he give the least sign of consciousness, warn me at once, I beseech you."

"Never fear," replied the younger; while Father Cristoforo, turning towards Renzo, "Let us go in here," he said. "But,"

he added suddenly, coming to a halt, "to me thou seemest to be exhausted. Thou must needs want food."

"'Tis true," replied Renzo. "Now that thou bringest it to my mind, I remember that my fast hath not been broken."

"Hold," rejoined the monk. And taking another porringer, he filled it at the kettle, and returning, gave it, with a spoon, to Renzo, whom he made to sit down on a mattress that served as his bed. He then went to draw a glass of wine from a barrel in the corner, and, placing it before his guest, he took his porringer and sat beside him.

"Oh, Father Cristoforo," quoth Renzo, "is it for thee to do such things? But so it was ever. I thank thee with all my heart."

"Thank not me," said the friar. "They are the provisions of the poor; but thou art poor thyself for the nonce. Now tell me what I have yet to learn—tell me about Lucia. And try to be brief, for the time is short, and there is much to do, as thou seest."

Renzo began to relate, between spoonfuls, the history of Lucia: how she had been given refuge at the convent of Monza, how she had been abducted——At the image of such sufferings and perils and the thought that he himself had directed her thither, the good friar held his breath; but he found it again on hearing of her wonderful rescue, her return to her mother, and her adoption by Donna Prassede.

"Now I shall tell thee of myself," continued Renzo. And he related concisely the story of the day in Milan and his flight: how he had always been far from home until, in these topsy-turvy times, he had ventured back; how he had missed seeing Agnese; and how he had heard in Milan of Lucia's being in the *lazaretto*. "And now I am here," he concluded; "I am here to seek her, to see if she be alive and if she still hold to her former mind; for—at times——"

"But," demanded the religious, "hast thou no clue to her more particular whereabouts?"

"None, dear father, except that she is here—if so be she still is, which God grant!"

"Ah, poor Renzo! But what search hast thou made here?"

"I have been going back and forth like a shuttlecock; but not to speak of the rest, I have seen none but men. So I concluded that the women must be in a place apart, but find it I could not. Now thou canst set me right."

"Dost thou not know, my son, that none but officials may enter there?"

"Even so; what can they do to me?"

"It is a just and a holy rule, my son; and, though the grievousness and multiplicity of the present evils prevent it from being enforced with full rigor, is that a reason why an honest man should break it?"

"But, Father Cristoforo!" objected Renzo, "Lucia was to have been my wife. Thou knowest the circumstances that parted us. For twenty months I have suffered and forborne. I came hither at so many risks, one worse than the other. And now——"

"I know not what to say," resumed the friar, replying to his own thoughts rather than to the young man's words. "Thou goest with good intentions, and would to God all those who have free access behaved as I can trust thee to do. God, whose blessing is certainly on thy constancy, thy perseverance in seeking her whom He gave thee; God, who is stricter than man, but more indulgent, will not regard what is irregular in thy manner of search. Remember only that, for thy conduct there, we must both of us render an account—not to man, it may easily be, but to God, without a doubt. Come hither." So saying, he arose, and Renzo with him. The latter, without ceasing to heed the other, had meantime resolved within himself not to speak of Lucia's vow, as he had at first proposed to do. "If he heareth this, too," he thought, "he will make more difficulties, of a certainty. Either I shall find her, and then there will be time for explanations, or—and, in that case, what boots it?"

Leading him to the threshold of the cabin, which faced north, the friar resumed: "Hark thee. Our Father Felice, the president of the *lazaretto,* will today conduct the cured (few enough

they are) elsewhere to spend their quarantine. Thou seest the church there in the centre——" and with a gaunt and trembling hand he pointed to the cupola of the chapel, towering off to the left through the murky air above the miserable array of huts. "There," he continued, "they are foregathering, to depart in procession by the same gate through which thou must have entered."

"Ah! it was for this, then, that they were clearing the street."

"Just so. And thou must also have noticed the bell tolling."

"I heard one stroke."

"It was the second. At the third they will be all assembled. Father Felice will make a brief address, and then lead them away. Do thou, upon the stroke, betake thyself thither. Seek to ensconce thyself behind the crowd at the edge of the street, where, without causing any distraction or attracting notice, thou canst see them pass by. Perhaps—perhaps she may be among them. If God hath not so willed, that quarter"—and he again raised his hand to indicate the side of the edifice that faced them—"that quarter of the building, and part of the space before it, is assigned to the women. There is a paling which divides the one section from the other, but there are breaches in it, and at places it doth not exist, so thou canst enter without difficulty. Once inside, so long as thou excite no suspicion, no one will be like to challenge thee. But if any one make objection, say that Father Cristoforo of ——— knoweth thee and will answer for thee. Seek her there. Seek with confidence and —resignation. For remember it is no trifle thou hast come to seek—a living person in the *lazaretto*. Dost thou know how often I have seen my flock renewed? how many carried off? how few go out alive?—Go prepared for a sacrifice——"

"Ay, I understand," interrupted Renzo, with rolling eyes and altered countenance—"I understand. I go. I shall look, I shall seek, here and there, and through the whole *lazaretto* high and low—and if I find her not——"

"And if thou find her not?" repeated the friar in a tone of seriousness and expectancy and with a look of stern admonition.

But Renzo, whose wrath, reenkindled by the suggestion of

doubt, had now blinded him utterly, took up the words and went on: "If I find not her, there is another whom I will find. Either in Milan, or in his crime-stained palace, or at the ends of the earth, or at home with the devil, I will find the scoundrel who hath separated us; the villain who, were it not for him, Lucia had been mine for these twenty months, and then, if death had been our lot, we would at least have died together. If he still breathes, I will find him——"

"Renzo!" exclaimed the monk, seizing him by the arm and eyeing him more sternly still.

"And if I find him," continued Renzo, swept on by his rage, "if the plague hath not already wreaked vengeance— The time is gone by when a coward with his bravos about him can drive folk mad and then laugh at their desperation. The time is come when men meet face to face; and—I will wreak my own vengeance."

"Wretch!" exclaimed Father Cristoforo with a voice that had resumed all its old fulness and sonority—"wretch!" and his drooping head raised up off his breast, his cheeks flushed with their former life, and his eyes flashed with uncanny awfulness. "Wretch, look about you!" And, while with one hand he held Renzo in a vise-like grip and shook him, he swept as much of the distressing scene about them as he could with the other. "See who it is that punisheth! He who judgeth, and is judged by none! He who chastiseth and pardoneth! And thou, worm of the earth, thou wouldst do justice! Thou know what justice is, thou! Go, unhappy wretch; be off! I had hoped—yes, hoped—that before my death God would give me the consolation of knowing that my poor Lucia was alive, perhaps of seeing her and hearing from her own lips that she would breathe a prayer towards that burial-pit which will soon be my grave. Go; thou hast robbed me of this hope. God hath not left her on earth for such as thou, and thou certainly darest not deem thyself worthy of God's consolation. He hath thought of her, for she is one of those souls for whom He reserveth consolation in Heaven. Begone! I have no more time to give thee."

So saying, he flung Renzo's arm from him, and started towards one of the invalids' cabins.

"Ah, father!" pleaded Renzo, following after the other suppliantly, "would you dismiss me in this manner?"

"How now?" resumed the Capuchin with unrelaxed severity. "Darest thou demand that I use the time of those poor afflicted creatures, who expect me to speak to them of God's mercy, that I may listen to thy words of rage and plans of vengeance? I listened when thou didst claim consolation and help. I forewent one work of charity for another. But now thou hast vengeance in thy heart, and what dost thou want of me? Begone! I have seen the oppressed die here forgiving their oppressors, and oppressors die lamenting that they could not throw themselves at the feet of their victims; I have wept with both; but with thee what have I to do?"

"Ah, I forgive! I forgive in truth! I forgive for good!" exclaimed the youth.

"Renzo!" said the friar with a more tranquil kind of seriousness, "think, and tell me how often hast thou said the same."

And, receiving no response for some little time, he suddenly bowed his head, and in a deep, solemn tone of voice resumed: "Dost thou know why I bear this habit?"

Renzo hesitated.

"Thou knowest!" insisted the old man.

"I know," replied Renzo.

"I have also hated; and I, who have just reproved thee for a thought, a word, I killed him whom I hated—hated obstinately —hated from my heart."

"Yes; but a tyrant, one of those——"

"Hush!" interrupted the priest. "Thinkest thou that, if there had been a good reason, I would not have discovered it in thirty years? Ah! if I could but instill into thy heart the sentiment I afterwards felt, and still feel, for the man I hated. If I could. I? No, but God can, and may He do so! Hark thee! Renzo; thy Creator is a better friend to thee than thou art thyself. Thou couldst plan revenge, but He is strong enough and merciful enough to frustrate it. He vouchsafes a grace to thee of

which poor Cristoforo was found unworthy. Thou knowest —thou hast said so often—that He can stay the hand of an oppressor; know also that He can likewise stay the hand of the avenger. Because thou art poor, or because thou art wronged, thinkest thou that He cannot protect from thy wrath one that hath been created in His own image? Thinkest thou He would leave thee free to work thy will? No; but what canst thou do? Thou canst hate to thy own perdition; thou canst, by indulging thy feelings, alienate every blessing from on high. Because, succeed as thou wilt, prosper as thou wilt, be sure that it will all turn to thy chastisement until thou hast forgiven so entirely that never again will there be room to say: I forgive."

"Yes, yes," agreed Renzo, all excited and confused; "I realize that I have never forgiven in good truth. I realize that I have spoken as a pagan, and not as a Christian. But now, by the grace of God, I forgive him from my heart."

"And if thou were to see him?"

"I would pray the Lord to give me patience and touch his heart."

"Wouldst thou remember that the Lord hath enjoined us, not to pardon our enemies, but to love them? Wouldst thou remember that He hath loved him enough to die for him?"

"Yes, with His help."

"Then come with me. Thou hast said: 'I will find him'; and find him thou shalt. Come, and thou shalt see against whom thou couldst hold hatred, to whom thou couldst wish ill and desire to inflict it, the life on which thou wouldst lay violent hands."

And, taking Renzo by the hand which he clutched with a grip like that of a young athlete, he started off. The latter, without daring to ask any further questions, followed at his heels.

After a few paces, the priest stopped at the door of one of the cabins, fixed his eyes on Renzo with a look of mingled gravity and tenderness, and ushered him into the interior.

The first object that struck his gaze was an invalid squatting on some straw at the far end of the room. He was not, however, seriously ill, but rather approaching convalescence. Seeing the religious, he shook his head, and the latter bowed his own with

an air of sorrow and resignation. Renzo, meanwhile, glancing about with impatient curiosity, saw three or four more patients, one of them lying apart on a mattress, wrapped in a sheet with a gentleman's cloak thrown over him like a blanket. He looked more steadily and recognized Don Rodrigo. He started and drew back, but the friar, renewing his pressure upon the other's arm, drew him to the foot of the bed, and, extending his other arm, pointed to the reclining figure at their feet.

The unfortunate sufferer lay quite still. His eyes were opened wide in an unseeing stare. The face was pallid and speckled with black. The lips were black likewise, and swollen. One would have pronounced it the face of a corpse, were it not for the violent spasms that convulsed it and gave testimony to a tenacious vitality. The chest rose from time to time with painful effort. The right hand, lying outside on the cape, clutched at the heart, and the fingers were livid and, at the tips, already black.

"Thou seest," said the priest in low and solemn accents. "It may be retribution, and it may be mercy. The sentiment thou feelest for this man that hath wronged thee, true, is the same sentiment the God thou, too, hast wronged will one day have for thee. Bless, and thou shalt be blessed. For four days he hath been as thou seest him without a sign of consciousness. Perhaps the Lord is ready to grant him a rational hour, but wished it to be the fruit of thy prayer. Perhaps He wishes it to be won by thy prayers and hers mingling together. Perhaps He reserveth such a grace for the lone outpourings of an afflicted but resigned heart. Perchance this man's salvation and thine now depend on thee, upon thy sentiments of forgiveness, of compassion, of—love!"

He paused, and joining his hands, bowed his head and prayed. Renzo did the same.

They were in this attitude for some moments, when the bell tolled again. They left off as if by prearrangement and went out. There were no further questions nor protestations spoken, but their faces were eloquent.

"Go now," resumed the friar. "Go prepared to receive a bless-

ing or to make a sacrifice, but to bless the Lord however thy quest may end. And whatever be its issue, come and tell me, and we will praise Him together."

And, without more words, they parted. One returned to the post he had just left; the other bent his steps towards the chapel, which was not beyond a hundred yards away.

Chapter XXXVI

Who could ever have prophesied to Renzo a few hours earlier that, at the very height of his search, at the most anxious and decisive moments of all, his heart would be divided between Lucia and Don Rodrigo? Still so it was. That harrowing figure thrust itself in between the tender or the terrible images that hope or fear conjured up by turns before his fancy. The words he had heard at the foot of that bed interjected themselves between the "Ayes" and "Noes" that struggled for the mastery of his mind. And he could not conclude an aspiration for the happy issue of the great crisis that was approaching without branching off into that other prayer that had been begun in the cabin and interrupted by the tolling of the bell.

The octagonal chapel, which rises from a short flight of approaching steps in the centre of the *lazaretto,* was originally open on all sides with no other support than its columns and pilasters—a building of filigree, so to speak. Each façade was pierced by an arch, and the general effect of airiness this produced was heightened by the intercolumnar spacing that supplemented and expanded the arches on either side. Within, a portico ran round what might be called the church proper, which consisted of only eight arches, corresponding to those in the façades, with a cupola surmounting the whole. So that the altar erected in the centre might be seen from the window of every room in the quadrilateral enclosure of the *lazaretto,* and from almost every point in the grounds. Now, the building being converted to quite other uses, these apertures have been all walled up; but the original masonry, remaining intact, indicates clearly the former architecture and the purpose it subserved.

Renzo had hardly started, when he perceived Father Felice make his appearance in the portico of the chapel and face the multitude assembled outside in the street from the arch that

looks towards the city. From his bearing one perceived that he had begun to speak.

He proceeded by a round about way through more alleys in order to come out at the rear of the audience, as had been recommended. On arriving he stood stock-still, surveying the whole assemblage; it was one jam—a pavement, so to speak, of human heads. In the centre there were a certain number covered with kerchiefs or veils. He fixed his eyes more attentively on that section, but, perceiving nothing beneath the surface, he turned in the direction in which all were looking. He was touched with compassion by the venerable figure of the preacher, and, with the modicum of attention he could command in such a moment of anxiety, he heard this fragment of the solemn discourse:

"Let us give a thought to the thousands and thousands who went out there," pointing over his shoulder to the gate in the rear, which leads to the Cemetery of St. Gregory—then one huge burial-pit. "Let us glance about us at the thousands and thousands who remain here, not knowing by which gate they will leave this place of uncertainties. Let us, finally, glance around at the few of us who are departing in safety. The Lord be blessed! blessed in His justice, and blessed in His mercy! blessed in death, and blessed in health! blessed in the preference He hath been pleased to extend to us! Oh, why hath He so ordained, my children, but to reserve a small remnant of His people, chastened by affliction and inflamed with gratitude? Why, but that we should hold our lives as more manifestly His free gift, and employ them in such works as we can dedicate unhesitatingly to Him? Why, but that the memory of our sufferings should make us sympathetic and obliging towards our fellow-man?

"And as we wend our way past yon multitude, with whom we have suffered and hoped and feared in common, and among whom we are leaving friends and relatives,—brethren, at least, for we are all brothers,—let our demeanor edify them, while our departure consoles them with the thought that it is possible to issue hence alive. God forbid that they should see in us any boisterous

joy, any worldly triumph, at escaping that death with which they are still wrestling so desperately. Let them see that our thanksgiving in departing is mingled with supplications for them, and let them promise themselves that we shall remember them outside and continue to pray for them in their misery. Let us begin, with this very journey,—yea! with its very first steps,—a life all given to charity. Let those who have recovered their former vigor lend a fraternal arm to the weak. Youths, support the aged. Ye who find yourselves childless, see around you how many children are without fathers. Take the place of fathers to them; and this charity, while it covers a multitude of your sins, will also assuage your sufferings."

Here the rising crescendo of stifled groans and sobs among the audience was suddenly hushed on seeing the preacher place a noose about his neck and cast himself upon his knees. No one made a sound, all intent on what was to come.

"For myself," he continued, "and for my brethren, who have been chosen, without anything to merit it, for the exalted privilege of serving Christ in your persons, I humbly beg your pardon if we have not worthily fulfilled so great an office. If sloth and the stubbornness of the flesh have made us tardy in answering your calls and dulled our hearts to your needs; if monotony and impatience have wrongly prevailed and brought a frown to our brows in your presence; if the sense of our importance hath made us overbearing, or our frailty hath betrayed us into negligence and given you cause for scandal: pardon our shortcomings! And may God, in like manner, forgive you all your offences and bless you." And, having made a large sign of the cross over his congregation, he arose.

We are able to detail, if not his precise words, at least the sense, the theme of his address, indeed; but the manner in which he delivered it baffles description. It was the manner of one who called it a privilege to tend the plague-stricken, only because he deemed it such; who confessed the unworthiness of his response, only because he felt that he had not responded worthily; who asked pardon, because he was convinced that he needed pardon. But the reader is left to imagine the sobs and tears

that such words elicited from people who had seen these Capuchins bent on nothing else but serving them, who had seen so many of them die at their task, and who had seen this, their spokesman, always the foremost in toil as he was the foremost in authority, until he had been brought to death's door himself. The marvelous friar next laid hold of a great cross that leaned against one of the pilasters, raised it aloft, and, leaving his sandals at the edge of the outer portico, descended the steps, and, passing through the crowd, which drew respectfully back, proceeded to head the procession.

Renzo, weeping as if he had been one of those from whom such a singular pardon had been asked, withdrew in turn and took up his post beside one of the cabins. There he remained waiting, his body shrinking into the background but his head thrust forward, with eyes bursting from their sockets and a beating heart, but withal, a definite new confidence, born, I believe, of the tender emotion which the sermon and the contagion of the general example had excited in his bosom.

Presently Father Felice passed by in his bare feet, bearing the long, heavy cross erect before him and with the noose dangling from his neck. His face was pale and thin, radiating at once compunction and courage; his step slow and resolute, as though moderated only to spare the weakness of others—the type of man throughout to whom the last back-breaking straw seems to give strength to carry the whole load. Immediately after him came the larger children, the most of them barefooted also, a very few clothed completely, some with only a smock to cover them. Then followed the women, almost invariably leading a child by the hand, chanting the *Miserère* antiphonally; and their thin, tremulous voices, the pallor and exhaustion of their countenances, were enough to engross the compassion of any spectator. But Renzo had use only for his eyes. From line to line, from face to face, he scanned them all without skipping one, the procession moving so slowly that he could do so at his leisure. On and on they come; on and on he looks. To no purpose. He gives a hurried glance at the rows which still remain; they are only a few. Now they have all passed—all unknown faces.

With arms hanging limp at his sides and head resting on his shoulder, he watched the disappearing column while the men passed by. His attention and hope revived on noticing, in the rear of the procession, several carts containing such invalids as were not yet able to walk. The women's vehicles came last, and the convoy again moved so slowly that Renzo could examine every face without one escaping him. He takes inventory of the first cart, the second, the third, and so on to the last, with the same invariable result, until no one remains but a Capuchin of serious mien with a staff in his hand who was to marshal their movements. It was Father Michele, whom we have already mentioned as being associated with Father Felice in the government of the *lazaretto*.

Thus vanished the last vestige of his fair hopes; and in vanishing, they not only took away the solace they had inspired, but, as generally happens, they left their host worse off than ever. The most he could expect now was to find Lucia still ill of the plague. But he grasped at the slender clue with all the powers of his soul, the liveliness of increased fear succeeding to the liveliness of disappointed hope. He entered the midway, and turned in the direction whence the procession had come. When he arrived at the chapel, he knelt on the lowest step, and there offered to God a prayer—or rather, a medley of incoherent words and unfinished phrases, of exclamations, entreaties, plaints and promises—such a communication as we could never address to men, because they lack the penetration to understand it and the patience to listen. They are not big enough to feel compassion unalloyed with contempt.

He got up somewhat heartened. Circling around the chapel, he found himself in the other thoroughfare, which he had not yet seen, leading to the opposite gate. After a few paces he perceived the fence of which the friar had spoken, with some of its palings missing, just as the other had said. He entered by one of these breaches and stood within the women's quarters. Almost at the first step he came upon a small bell lying upon the ground, such as the *monatti* wore on one of their feet. It occurred to him that such an article might serve as a passport in the en-

closure. He picked it up, looking around to see if any one observed him, and tied it on in the approved fashion. Then he began his quest, a quest whose very vastness would have made it formidable, even though the objects had been entirely different. He glanced about him, or rather, he began to contemplate a new assortment of misery, so like what he had left, in one way, and in another so unlike; because the same general calamity here presented new variations of suffering, new types of weakness, new notes of lamentation, new modes of mutual assistance and sympathy, as it excited in the beholder a different feeling of compassion or revulsion.

He had proceeded I know not how far, when he heard some one behind call out "Hola!" as if to him. He turned and saw, some distance off, a commissary, waving to him and halloing: "Over there in the wards; they want help. Here the place is all cleared."

Renzo perceived at once for whom he had been taken, and that the bell was the cause of the misunderstanding. He reproached himself for having given thought only to the embarrassments which such insignia might save him, and not to what they might bring with them. But he divined, at the same time, the best way out of the difficulty. He shook his head repeatedly and briskly, as though to say he had understood and would obey, and got out of sight forthwith by diving in among the cabins.

When he was what seemed a safe distance off, he thought of ridding himself of the cause of such mischief; and, to carry out his intention without being seen, he thrust himself into a small area between two cabins that stood back to back. He stooped over to remove the bell, and, standing thus with his ear against the straw partition, he heard a voice come from within—Heaven above! was it possible? His whole soul strained towards the sound; his breathing ceased—Yes, yes; it was her own voice. "Fear of what?" she was saying. "We have been through more than a rain-storm. He who hath kept us so far, will keep us still."

If Renzo did not scream, it was not for fear of the conse-

quences, but because he lacked the breath. His knees trembled, a cloud came over his eyes; but it was only for a minute. At the next he was more alert and vigorous than before. In a hop, skip and jump he turned the corner of the cabin and reached the threshold. He saw her who had spoken, standing and leaning over the bed. She also turned at the sound and stared as though at a phantom. She looked more closely, and cried out: "God in Heaven!"

"Lucia! I have found thee! I have found thee! really thee! and alive!" exclaimed Renzo, drawing nearer and shaking from head to foot.

"O God in Heaven!" she repeated, trembling still more than he. "Thou! What has thou done? How camest thou here? The plague!"

"I've had it. And thou?"

"Ah!—I, too. And my mother?"

"I have not seen her. She is at Pasturo, and well, I think. But thou—how pale thou lookest! and how weak! But cured! Thou'rt cured, art thou not?"

"The Lord hath spared me. Ah, Renzo, why hast thou come here?"

"Why?" said Renzo, coming always closer. "Why, dost thou ask? Why should I come? Is there need to tell thee? Whom else have I? Is my name not Renzo still? and thine Lucia?"

"Ah! what art thou saying? what art thou saying? Have they not written thee?"

"Yes, only too faithfully. Fine matters to write to a poor unfortunate exile—to a poor lad that never did harm, at least to thee!"

"But Renzo, Renzo! Since you knew—Why do you come? Oh, why?"

"Why do I come? Ah, Lucia! Why do I come, do you say? After so many vows! Are we not still ourselves? Hast thou forgotten? What else was left us to do?"

"Oh, God of mercy!" sobbed Lucia, joining her hands and raising her eyes to Heaven, "why didst Thou not take me to

Thyself?—Oh, Renzo! whatever hast thou done? See; I was beginning to hope that—with time—I could forget——"

"Fine hopes! Fine things to be telling me to my face!"

"Ah, what hast thou done? and in such a place as this! amid all this misery! all these reminders! here, where death reigns supreme, thou hast dared——"

"For those that die, let us pray God that they may go to a better place. But that is no reason why the living should despair of——"

"But Renzo! Renzo! you know not what you say. A promise to the Madonna! A vow!"

"And I tell thee that such promises do not hold."

"The Lord forgive thee! What art thou saying? Where have you been, and with whom have you been associating these past months? Where have you learned to talk thus?"

"I speak like a good Christian. And of the Madonna I think better than thou; because I believe she accepteth not promises that prejudice the neighbor. If the Madonna had spoken, oh, then! But what passed? An idea through thy own brain. Dost know what thou shouldst promise the Madonna? Promise her that we shall call our first daughter Mary, for that I am ready to promise, too. These be better ways of honoring the Madonna. These be more sensible devotions, and harm none."

"Nay, nay; speak not so. You know not what you say. You know nothing about vows. You have never been through the ordeal, nor felt the call. Go! in Heaven's name, go!"

And, so saying, she fled from him, and turned towards the bed.

"Lucia!" called Renzo, without budging, "tell me this much, at least: If this were all—would you still feel towards me as before?"

"Heartless man!" Lucia replied, turning around and with difficulty containing her tears, "if you made me speak unavailing words, words that would do me scathe, words that were sinful to speak, would you be content? Go, go, go! Forget about me. 'Tis plain we were not for each other. We shall meet above; life is short. Go. Try to let my mother know that I am cured, that God hath not deserted me even here, that I have found a

mother's heart in this good woman here. Tell her I hope she too will be spared, and that we shall meet when and where God willeth—Go, I beseech thee. Think of me no more, except in prayer to God."

And, like one that has nothing more to say and flies from a danger, she drew still nearer the bed on which lay the woman of whom she spoke.

"Listen, Lucia!" pursued Renzo, without, however, coming a step closer.

"No, no; leave me, I beseech thee."

"Listen. Father Cristoforo——"

"What?"

"Is here."

"Here? Where? How dost thou know?"

"I left him but now; we were some time together. And a religious of his stamp, I think——"

"He here! To assist the plague-stricken, to be sure. But here! Hath he had the plague?"

"Ah, Lucia, I fear, fear very much, that—" and, while he was hesitating to speak words that were painful to him and must be doubly painful to Lucia, she again left the bedside and drew near—"I fear he hath it even now."

"Oh, God help him, the poor saintly old man! But what do I say? God help us! Is he in bed? How is he tended?"

"He is up and about, tending others. But if you saw him, how pale he is, and how he trembles! After seeing so many—one is not deceived."

"Oh, God help us! And he is really here!"

"Here, and not far off; hardly farther than from thy house to mine—if thou rememberest——"

"Ah! blessed Mother!"

"Well, not much farther. And never think that we did not speak of thee! Such things as he hath said to me—And if thou knowest whom I saw! All in good time. First, I must tell thee what he said, with his own mouth. He said I did well in coming to seek thee, and that the Lord wisheth lads to do so, and that

He would help me find thee. And so He hath. But then he is a saint. So, you see!"

"But he spoke thus because he did not know——"

"What should he know of a silly maid's own fancies, obeyed without regard to reason or advice? Such a good, sensible man bothereth not his head about such nonsense. But think whom he showed me!" And here he related his visit to Don Rodrigo's bedside. Lucia, though her sensibility and her mind must have been used to strong emotions, living in such a place, was still horror-struck and filled with pity.

"And there, too," continued Renzo, "he spoke like a saint. 'The Lord,' said he, 'hath decreed, mayhap, to be merciful to the poor wretch' (for now I can call him nothing else), 'and is biding the right moment, but wisheth us two to pray for him together.' Together! d'ye hear?"

"Ay, ay; we shall pray, each in the corner to which God calleth us. He shall not be at a loss to put them together."

"But those be his own words."

"But Renzo, he knoweth not——"

"But know you not that, when 'tis a saint that speaks, 'tis the Lord that prompteth him, and that he would not have spoken so if it were not so to be?—And Don Rodrigo's soul? I have indeed prayed for him, and shall pray—from my heart, as if he were my own brother. But how is he to fare beyond, think you, if this matter be not set right here, and the harm he did be not undone? If only thou wilt listen to reason, then all will be as before: what is done is done, his penance is accomplished, and——"

"No, Renzo; no. The Lord needeth not that we should sin to work His mercies. Leave that to Him; our duty is to pray. Had I died that night, could He not have pardoned him nevertheless? And if I did not die but was rescued——"

"And thy mother, poor Agnese, who always liked me so well and longed to see us man and wife, hath she not also told thee that it is a misguided step? She who hath brought thee to reason on other occasions, because in certain matters she reasons better than thou——"

"My mother! Would you have my mother counsel me to break a vow? Why, Renzo! you are beside yourself."

"Oh, pshaw! Must you be told the plain truth? Women's heads were not made to understand these things. Father Cristoforo told me to return and tell him if I found thee. I go. We shall hear what he will say."

"Ay, ay; go to him. Tell him that I shall pray for him, and bid him to pray for me, who have so much need of prayers. But, in Heaven's name and for the sake of thy soul and mine, come not back to frighten me and—tempt me. Father Cristoforo will be able to explain matters and recall thee to thy senses. He will help thee to set thy heart at peace."

"Set my heart at peace! Oh, drive that thought from thy head. These are the same ugly words thou badest them write me once before, and only I myself know what they made me suffer; and now thou dost not hesitate to speak them to my face. And I tell thee fairly and squarely that I will not set my heart at peace. Thou wouldst forget me; but I will not forget thee. And I promise thee, d'ye hear, that, if thou drivest me to rashness, I will live rashly forever more. To the foul fiend with silk-spinning; to the foul fiend with honorable conduct. Dost thou condemn me to a life of desperation; desperate, then, will I be. And that unfortunate wretch yonder! God knoweth that I have pardoned him from my heart; but thou—wouldst thou have me reflect for a whole lifetime that, were it not for him—? Lucia, thou hast bid me forget thee. Forget thee! Where shall I learn how? About whom have I thought all these months?—And after so many tokens, so many vows! What have I done since we parted? Is it because I have suffered that thou usest me so? because I have been unfortunate? because the world hath persecuted me? because I have been so long homeless, forlorn, far from thee? because, at the first opportunity, I have come to seek thee?"

"O most holy Virgin!" exclaimed Lucia, when her sobbing at length permitted her to articulate, with her hands joined and her eyes raised towards heaven—"O holy Virgin, come thou to my assistance! Thou knowest that, since that awful night, I have

not known such another moment as this. Thou didst help me then; help me once again!"

"Yes, Lucia; thou dost well to invoke the Madonna. But why wouldst thou think that she, who is so kind, the Mother of mercy, can rejoice in our suffering—mine at least—for a word that escaped thee when thou knewest not what thou spokest? Wouldst thou believe she helped thee only to our undoing?—Or, if this is but a pretext and I am become odious to thee, tell me—speak out."

"I beseech thee, Renzo, I beseech thee by our dear departed, have done. Do not kill me outright—at such a moment above all. Go to Father Cristoforo, commend me to his prayers; but return not again—not again."

"I shall go; but, believe me, I shall return. I would return, were this the end of the earth." And he was gone.

Lucia sat, or rather, sank down upon the floor at the side of the bed, and, leaning her head against it, continued to weep bitterly. Her companion, who had been a silent but amazed spectator up to this point, now asked her the meaning of such an apparition, of such a dispute, of these tears. But perhaps the reader would rather know who she was. A very few words will explain.

She was a well-to-do shopkeeper about thirty years old. Within a few days she had seen her husband and all her children die of the plague. A few days later she had taken it herself, and, on being brought to the *lazaretto,* had been placed in the same cabin with Lucia about the time that the latter, after having, unknown to herself, passed the crisis of the malady and outlived several successive room-mates, began to grow better and regain consciousness—for, from the very first instant when she was stricken in Don Ferrante's, she had been like one in a trance. The cabin was capable of accommodating only two; and between the two, sorely afflicted, lorn, panic-stricken, alone amid the vast multitude, there had arisen an intimacy and affection which years of acquaintance could not have brought about. In a short time Lucia was able to minister to her companion, whose condition had been desperate. Now that she, too, was out of danger,

they kept each other company and took turns in watching and speaking words of cheer.

It was agreed that they should wait and leave the *lazaretto* together, and not separate even then. The shopkeeper, who, having made her brother, a commissary of health, the custodian of her house, her shop and her funds, was now about to become the sole proprietress of much more than she needed to live in comfort, and wished to keep Lucia with her as a daughter or sister. Lucia had assented, with what gratitude to her benefactress and to Providence the reader is left to imagine; but only until she could hear from her mother and—if so be—know her will. For the rest, her naturally reserved disposition made her silent about the vow, her betrothal and her extraordinary adventures. But now, in the ebullition of feeling which assailed her, she was at least as eager to confide as the other was to listen. So, taking her friend's hand in both of her own, she began to satisfy her curiosity without any further restraint than her sobbing interposed.

Renzo, meanwhile, was racing back to Father Cristoforo's quarters. With some little application and not without retracing his steps now and again, he at length found the location. Father Cristoforo was not in his cabin, but by dint of prowling about and ferreting in the vicinity he at last discovered him bent double over a dying man, to whom he was speaking words of comfort. He stood by, waiting in silence. Presently he saw the priest close the other's eyes, kneel down and breathe a short prayer. On seeing him rise, Renzo started off to meet him.

"Hah! Well?" was the friar's greeting.

"She's here; I've found her."

"In what case?"

"Well. Or, at least, up."

"The Lord be thanked!"

"But—" continued Renzo, on coming close enough to speak in an undertone—"there are other complications now."

"What is the matter?"

"I mean— Thou knowest what a good lass Lucia is; but she can be stubborn, too. After all our plighted faith and thwarted

hopes, now she saith she cannot wed me, because in the frenzy of that awful night she—so to speak—dedicated herself to the Madonna, or something. 'Tis nonsense, is it not? Well enough for those who have the learning and know how to make vows, but for us plain folk who have not been instructed—they bind not, do they, father?"

"Tell me, is she far off?"

"Oh, no; only a little beyond the chapel."

"Wait here for one moment," said the friar; "and we shall go there together."

"Thou meanest thou'lt persuade her——"

"I know nothing as yet, son. I must see her first."

"I see," replied Renzo, left, with downcast eyes and arms folded across his breast, to digest his undiminished uncertainty as best he might. The priest again besought Father Vittore to take his place, and, going to his own cabin, came forth with his scrip and bade Renzo follow. They bent their steps first towards the hovel they had entered together shortly before. This time the friar went in alone. He reappeared in a moment, saying: "No change. Let us pray; let us pray." Then, "Do thou lead the way now," he resumed.

And without more delay they started off.

The sky had, meanwhile, become more lowering, and the storm it heralded was now certain and not far off. Frequent flashes of lightning pierced the deepening gloom and illumined the long wings and arcades of the *lazaretto,* the cupola of the chapel and the humble roofs of the cabins with momentary brightness. The thunder crashed, and the heavens reverberated the sharp detonations from pole to pole. The youth went before, impatient to reach his goal, but yet moderating his pace to suit his companion's strength. The latter dragged himself along, wearied with toil, weakened by disease, stifled by the sultriness. From time to time he raised his haggard face to heaven, as if to take a fuller breath.

Renzo halted and turned around on perceiving the cabin. "She is in here," he said with trembling voice.

They enter. "Behold!" cried the woman from the couch.

Lucia started up and ran to meet the elder, exclaiming: "Whom do I see? O Father Cristoforo!"

"Well, well, well, Lucia! The Lord hath delivered thee from many dangers. Thou must feel glad to have hoped in Him so constantly."

"Ah! yes; but thou, father? Alas! how changed thou art! How dost thou, I beseech thee? How dost thou?"

"As God wills, and as, by His grace, I will, too," replied the friar serenely. Then, drawing her to one side, he resumed: "Hark! I can remain but a few moments. Art thou disposed to confide in me as before?"

"Oh! and art thou not always a father to me?"

"Then, my daughter, what is this vow of which Renzo hath told me?"

"It is a vow I made to the Madonna—oh! in such a moment of anguish—never to marry."

"Poor child! But did it occur to you at the time that you were bound by your troth?"

"It being an engagement to our Lord and the Madonna—No; it did not occur to me."

"The Lord accepts willingly our offerings and sacrifices, when we offer what is our own; because He wants our hearts and our wills to be His. But thou couldst not offer Him the will of another to whom thou art already bound."

"Have I done ill?"

"Nay, child; it is not that. I believe that the blessed Virgin hath already accepted the intention of an afflicted heart and offered it to God for thy behoof. But tell me, hast thou consulted with no one in the matter?"

"I never thought it wrong, that I should accuse myself of it in confession; and, of course, there is no need to mention the little good we do."

"Thou hast no other reason for withholding the troth thou hast plighted to Renzo?"

"As to that—on my side—what reason—? I could not just say—" replied Lucia, with a hesitancy that indicated anything

but uncertainty of mind. And her face, colorless as it still was from disease, flushed scarlet.

"Dost thou believe," pursued the old man, lowering his eyes, "that God hath given His Church the power to bind and loose, accordingly as greater good will come of continuing or of dissolving the debts and obligations men may have contracted with Him?"

"Yes; I believe it."

"Know, then, that we, who have been entrusted here with the care of souls, possess the largest possible faculties of the Church for all who seek our intervention, and that I can, therefore, absolve you, if you request it, from whatever obligation you may have contracted by reason of your vow."

"But is it not sinful to turn back and repent of the promise made to the Madonna? I made it with my whole heart at the time—" said Lucia, torn between such an unexpected hope assaulting her on the one side and the phantom of her old terror, fortified as it was by the reflections that had now for so long a time been the principal occupations of her mind.

"A sin, daughter?" returned the priest—"a sin to have recourse to the Church, and to request her minister to use the authority he hath received from her and she hath received from God? I have seen how you two were drawn towards each other, and, if a pair ever seemed to have been united by God, it is surely you. And now I see not why He should wish to part you. I bless Him that He hath enabled me, unworthy as I am, to speak in His name and to cancel thy words. If thou askest that I should absolve thee from thy vow, I shall not hesitate an instant. Nay, I desire that thou shouldst ask."

"Then—then—I ask," said Lucia, her face no longer clouded except by her maiden blushes.

The monk beckoned to the youth, who had been standing in the farthest corner looking on (since that was all that lay in his power) at the conversation which concerned him so closely; and, when he had approached, "With the authority given me by the Church," continued he in a louder voice, "I declare thee free from the vow of virginity, annulling what was only thoughtless,

and absolving thee from any obligation that may have been contracted."

The reader may imagine what music these words made in Renzo's ears. He thanked their author with eloquent eyes, then sought Lucia's own—but in vain.

"Return now, without fear or scruple, to the thoughts of other days," went on the Capuchin. "Beg again of the Lord the grace thou didst then pray for to be a good, holy wife; and be assured He will grant it more abundantly after all your afflictions. And thou," he said, turning to Renzo, "remember, son, that, if the Church giveth back thy companion, she does so, not to afford thee temporal and worldly gratifications, which, even though they could be unalloyed, must end in the terrible pain of parting; but to put both of you in the way of consolation that knoweth no end. Love each other like wayfaring associates, remembering that you must part and hoping to be reunited. Thank Heaven that it hath led you to this state, not by turbulent and fleeting joys, but along the path of affliction and anguish, to dispose your hearts to rejoice tranquilly and recollectedly. If God grant you children, raise them up for Him; teach them but to love Him and their fellow-man; all the rest will follow easily. Lucia, hath he told thee," pointing to Renzo, "what he hath seen?"

"He hath told me all."

"Pray for him; pray unweariedly. Also for me say a prayer. — My children, I wish you to preserve a remembrance of poor Cristoforo." Here he drew from his scrip a common wooden box, but planed and polished with a certain Capuchinesque refinement. "This," he continued, "contains the remnant of that bread—the first I ever begged—you have heard tell of it—I leave it in your keeping. Treasure it. Show it to your children. It's a rascally world they will be born into and rascally times, amid proud and high-handed neighbors. Tell them to forgive always and every one, and to pray also, in their turn, for poor Cristoforo."

He handed the box to Lucia, who took it with the same respect with which she would take a relic. Then, "Tell me," he resumed in a more even tone, "what resources have you here in

Milan? Where do you count on staying when you leave here? And who will take you back to your mother—whom may God have spared?"

"This good lady hath been a mother to me here. We shall leave together, and then she will provide."

"God bless thee for it," said the friar, approaching the bed.

"And I thank thee in turn for the consolation thou hast been to these poor creatures," returned the widow; "though, in truth, I had counted upon keeping my Lucia with me always. But I'll keep her for the time being, and then accompany her to her mother; and," she subjoined in an undertone, "I take it upon me to fit her out for her wedding. I have more than I need and none left to share it with me."

"In so doing," replied the priest, "thy great immolation glorifies God and benefits thy fellow-man. I do not recommend this lass to thy care; I see she is already like thy own kin. It remaineth only to praise the Lord, who sheweth Himself a Father even amidst chastisements, and who, in bringing you together, hath given so clear a proof of His love to both. Come," he continued, turning to Renzo and taking him by the hand, "we two have naught more to do here; we have stayed too long already. Let us go."

"Ah, father," said Lucia, "shall I not see thee again? I am cured, who am so useless in the world; and thou——"

"For a long time," replied the old man in mild and solemn accents, "I have besought the Lord a favor—a great favor: that I might end my days in the service of my fellow-man. If now He vouchsafed to grant it, 'twould need that all my friends should help me to thank Him for His mercy. Come, give Renzo his commission for thy mother."

"Tell her only what you have seen," Lucia bade her betrothed: "that I have found a second mother here; that both she and I shall come as soon as may be; and that I hope—oh! I hope —to find her well."

"If you need money," volunteered Renzo, "I have with me those crowns you sent, and——"

"Nay, nay," the widow broke in; "I am overburdened with it, and——"

"Come," repeated the friar.

"Good-bye for the nonce, Lucia," said Renzo; "and thou also, gentle lady," he continued, not finding the words that would express what he felt.

"Perhaps the Lord will grant that we shall all meet again," hazarded Lucia.

"May He be with you always and bless you," said Fra Cristoforo to the two women, and withdrew with Renzo from the cabin.

It wanted but little of nightfall, and the weather became ever more threatening. The Capuchin again offered the youth a shelter for the night in his own cabin. "I cannot keep thee company," he subjoined; "but at least thou wouldst have a roof."

But Renzo was in a frenzy to start, and besides, he was loath to remain longer in such a place when it would not enable him to see Lucia, or even to spend a little time with the good old friar. As to the hour and the weather, he would not have found any difference, at that moment, between night and day, sunshine and rain, zephyr and tornado. He, therefore, merely thanked his benefactor, and said that he wished to go in search of Agnese without delay.

When they were in the midway, the friar grasped him by the hand, and, "If you find Agnese," he said, "—and God grant you may,—greet her for me, and bid her and all the other friends of Fra Cristoforo who survive to pray for him. God be with you and bless you always."

"O father, father!—and shall we not meet again?"

"Up above, I hope." And with these words, he went away. Renzo stood looking at him until his figure was lost from sight, then hurriedly started for the entrance, glancing compassionately for the last time to the right and left as he went at the abode of suffering. The place was now in a ferment. *Monatti* were scurrying hither and thither, lugging articles and securing the flaps of the pavilions. Convalescents were dragging themselves along, either towards these hovels or else towards the arcades, to shelter themselves from the impending storm.

Chapter XXXVII

In fact, hardly had Renzo crossed the threshold of the *lazaretto* and turned to the right to find the lane from which he had emerged that morning under the walls of the city, when the rain began—at first a fusillade of great, scattering drops that bounced from the white, hard roadway like hailstones, raising little puffs of dust where they struck, then thickening, and, before he reached the lane, poured down in torrents. Renzo, instead of shrinking from it, expanded, luxuriated under the downfall. It was a delight to feel the refreshing coolness in the air, to hear the tinkle of rain on grass and foliage and see the leaves dance and sparkle with fresh green lustre under the dripping wet. He drank in great, deep lungfuls, and in the sudden revolution of nature he realized more vividly and unrestrainedly the revolution which had taken place in his own fate.

How much more unequivocal and unqualified the sentiment would have been, had he been able to foresee what was evident a few days later: that this same downpour was washing away the contagion; that the *lazaretto* would swallow no more victims in its maw, even though it did not give back all its present tenants; that within a week shops and houses would open their doors, and quarantine would be a thing of the past; that the plague would survive only in a few sporadic cases, the inevitable aftermath that such a scourge leaves in its wake.

So our traveler gaily pursued his way, with no thought of routes, or destination, or time, or stopping-places, intent only on going ahead, arriving at his hamlet, finding some one to talk to and, above all, of starting out promptly for Pasturo to look for Agnese. He trudged on and on, his mind all agog with the events of the day; but out of the welter of remembered horrors and dangers and distresses one thought bobbed up persistently: I have found her. She is well. She is mine. There-

upon he would execute a curvet, and then shake himself like a spaniel after leaving the water. Sometimes he would content himself with rubbing his hands briskly together. Then, on and on, with more eagerness than ever. Looking about him, he collected the thoughts of the morning and the day before where he had dropped them along the road, so to say, in coming; and he found more satisfaction in precisely those which he had tried the hardest to banish—the difficulty of finding her at all, or the doubt of finding her alive amid so many dead and dying. "And I have found her—alive!" he would always conclude.

He reconstructed in imagination the most awful predicaments of the day. He fancied himself taking hold of the knocker, and wondering if the answer would be "Yes" or "No," and then receiving the answer he did! and then being set upon by a pack of mad ruffians before the answer had had time to reach his comprehension! And then all at sea in the *lazaretto!* Like searching for a needle in a haystack! And then to find her in spite of all! He conjured up his feelings on seeing the procession of convalescents come to an end. What a moment! What anguish at not finding her! And now nothing mattered more. And then the women's quarters! And then, behind that cabin, when he was least expecting it, her voice—her own voice! And to see her—to see her up and about! And then another snarl, that vow of hers, holding faster than ever! That, too, goes by the board! And that hatred of Don Rodrigo, that ceaseless gnawing that aggravated all his misfortunes and poisoned all his satisfaction,—that, too, gone! So that his contentment would have been supreme were it not for his uncertainty about Agnese, his sad forebodings about Father Cristoforo and the presence of the plague about him.

He reached Sesto towards nightfall, without the storm's showing sign of abating. But, feeling in finer fettle than ever, and lodgings being so hard to find, and soaked as he was to the skin, he did not even consider stopping for the night. The only thing that bothered him was his appetite, which could have made away, in the exhilarated state of his feelings, with much more than the thin soup of the Capuchin. He looked about and perceived a

bake-shop. By complying with the formality of the tongs, and the rest of the ceremonies, he procured two loaves. Munching one and thrusting the other into his pocket, he pushed on.

When he passed by Monza, it was dark night, but he succeeded in finding the gate that led out to the Lecco road. But, this said, and it was far from a trifle, the reader is left to imagine the state of the thoroughfare, or the states, for it became momentarily worse. Sunk (like all the others—which we must surely have explained before) between high banks on either side like the bed of a river, it resembled at that moment, if not a river, at least a mill-race, to say nothing of the puddles, from which it was only by main force that he could extricate his shoes or even his feet. But Renzo pulled through as best he might, without impatience or profanity or regrets; reflecting that each step, cost what it might, carried him that much farther ahead, that the rain would stop when it pleased God, that the day would dawn in its own good time, and that the road he traversed meantime would be behind him.

And, to tell the truth, he did not even think of such things, except when it was unavoidable. They were all so many distractions; the real business of his mind was retracing the past unlucky years—so many entanglements, so many misadventures, so many times when he was tempted to lose hope itself and give up; and then, setting over against the past the picture of such a different future—the arrival of Lucia, the wedding, setting up housekeeping, recounting all these adventures, and a whole long lifetime.

How he managed, when he came to a crossroads, whether it was his slight experience of the country and his eyesight that helped him to find the right way, or whether it was a random guess, we cannot state; because he himself, who was wont to relate his story with great minuteness, not to say prolixity (and everything leads to the inference that our anonymous author listened to it more than once), he himself at that point of his narrative used to say that, as regards that night, he could remember it only as if it had been a dream he dreamed in bed.

The upshot of it all was that, towards daybreak, he found himself on the bank of the Adda.

The storm had not ceased, but at a certain stage, from being a deluge, it had turned to rain, then to a fine, soft, even drizzle. The clouds, high and scant, opposed only a thin, diaphanous veil to the gathering light, which gave Renzo at last a glimpse of the landscape. It embraced his own native village. What he felt at the sight cannot be described. Suffice it to say that these mountains, this near-by Resegone, this district of Lecco, had all become like a personal belonging. He gave another glance at himself, and discovered that he looked as strange as he felt. His clothes were unsightly, and clung to him like a plaster. From head to waist he dripped like an eaves. From waist to feet he was all clay and mud. Bedraggled and spattered was the best that could be said for any part of him. Had he been able to see his whole person in a mirror, with the brim of his hat drooping limply and his lank hair glued against his face, he would have been astonished still more. As to being tired, he was so, no doubt, but he did not perceive it; and the freshness of dawn, combined with the freshness of the night air and of his quasi-bath, only increased his fierce avidity for walking.

And now he is at Pescate. He is skirting along the lower reach of the Adda and bestows a melancholy glance at Pescarenico in passing. He is crossing the bridge, and in a moment more, by highroads and short-cuts, he is at the house of his friend. His host, who had risen and was standing in the doorway observing the weather, turned his gaze to the strange figure before him, so water-soaked, so bedaubed, so filthy, in one word, and, at the same time, so vivacious and unconcerned. In his whole life he had never seen one so woebegone and so cheerful.

"Ho!" he exclaimed. "Here already? And in such weather? What luck?"

"I've found her," replied Renzo; "I've found her, I've found her."

"And well?"

"Cured; which is better. I'll never get through thanking the Lord and His blessed Mother while I have breath. But such

things as I have seen, such prodigies! I'll tell thee the whole story anon."

"But what a pickle thou'rt in!"

"I am a picture, eh?"

"In faith, your breeches do need a bath, but your doublet could tell them where to find water. But hold; I'll light a fire."

"And I'll not object. Guess where it overtook me. Just at the door of the *lazaretto*. But pish! Let the weather ply its trade, and I'll ply mine."

His friend was off, and returned with two armfuls of kindling. One armful he threw on the floor, and the other he placed on the hearth, where, with some of the embers of last night's fire, he soon had a fine blaze. Renzo, meanwhile, doffed his hat, and after a good shaking, pitched it from him. Then, with more ado, he got out of his doublet. He drew forth from his breeches pocket his knife, the sheath of which was as wet as if it had been in soak. He laid it down, observing: "It's dripping, too—but with water, thank the Lord! I was on the brink—But I'll tell thee that anon." And he rubbed his hands. "Now do me another favor," he subjoined. "That bundle that I left in the upper room, get it for me, because, until these duds be dry——"

Having returned with the bundle, "You must be hungry, too," his friend remarked. "Of drink, of course, there was no lack; but food——"

"I did make out to buy a couple of loaves yestere'en late; but, in truth, they only put an edge on my appetite."

"Leave that to me," replied the other. He put water in the kettle, which he hung on its hook, resuming: "I go to milk. When I return, the water will be boiled, and we'll make a fine hasty-pudding. Meantime the house is yours."

Renzo, left to himself, finished undressing, not without difficulty, since his garments were almost glued to his skin, rubbed himself dry, and dressed anew from top to toe. His friend returned and installed himself at the hearth. Renzo, meanwhile, sat down to wait.

"Now, indeed, I know that I am tired," he said. "What a walk it was, to be sure. But that's a trifle now. 'Twill take

a whole day to tell thee all. Poor Milan! how it is served! The things one is compelled to see, and to touch, too! Enough to make one loathe one's own self! I needed just such a soaking as I got, I tell thee, every drop of it. And the tricks those worshipful burghers would have been pleased to play me! Thou shalt hear all. But to see that *lazaretto!* One becomes swamped in misery. Enough; I'll tell thee all anon.—And Lucia lives, and she will return, and be my wife; and thou must stand up for me, and, plague or no plague, I mean that we shall be merry for a few hours anyhow."

For the rest, he kept his promise of entertaining his friend the whole day with his narrative, the more so as the latter passed the day, being rainy, in the house, at times seated beside his friend, at times busy repairing a small vat and cask and in other preparations for the vintage; at which Renzo did not fail to lend him a hand, being, as he was wont to say, one of those who tire more at doing nothing than working. He could not refrain, however, from running over to Agnese's house, to look at a certain window and to indulge again in the luxury of rubbing his hands in glee. He returned without having been seen and went to bed forthwith. Before dawn he had risen, and, seeing that the day was rainless, if not fair, he took to the road for Pasturo.

It was still early when he reached the village; because he was smitten with an eagerness, no less than that which the reader may entertain, to arrive at conclusions. He inquired about Agnese. They told him that she was well, and pointed out a sequestered cottage where she lived. He made for it, and called to her from the street. At the well-known sound, she rushed to the window, and, while she stood gaping, Renzo anticipated the words, or sounds, that stuck in her throat, saying: "Lucia is cured. I saw her the day before yesterday. She sends her greetings, and will come shortly. Besides, I have a bagful of news—such a bagful."

What with surprise at the apparition, pleasure at the announcement and feverishness to know more, Agnese would launch into an exclamation, then veer off into an inquiry, and leave both unfinished. Then, forgetful of the precautions she had for so

long been wont to observe, she was for admitting him to the house.

"Hold!" said Renzo. "And the plague? Thou hast not had it, I believe."

"Not I. And thou?"

"I have had. So that we must be prudent. I come from Milan, and there, as I shall tell thee anon, I was up to my eyes in the contagion. 'Tis true I've changed since from head to foot, but 'tis a vileness that sticks at times like witchcraft. And since the Lord hath preserved thee so far, I mean that thou shouldst keep aloof till the epidemic be over. Thou art our mother, d'ye see, and we must live long and happily together to make up for all we've suffered, or all I've suffered, at least."

"But—" Agnese was beginning.

"No," Renzo broke in; "there are no 'Buts' that hold. I know what thou wouldst say; but all 'Buts' are a thing of the past. Thou shalt hear. Come out into the open, some place where we can talk at our leisure and without any danger, and thou shalt hear all."

Agnese pointed to a garden back of the house. "There," she added, "thou wilt see two benches on entering, facing each other, as if put there on purpose. I am coming."

Renzo went and seated himself on one of the benches, and a moment later Agnese took her place on the other. I am sure that, if the reader, informed as he is of all that has taken place, could have made up a third in the party, and could have seen their animated conversation with his own eyes, and heard with his own ears the descriptions, the inquiries, the explanations, the ejaculations, the condolences and the congratulations,—Don Rodrigo, and Father Cristoforo, and all the rest of the blessed drama, and the pictures of the future, as clear and precise as those of the past,—I am sure, I say, that he would have relished it keenly, and would have been the very last to leave. But to have that same conversation served up on paper, with words manufactured of ink and without one new fact to recommend it, is a dish I think he would not care for, preferring to guess for himself what took place. The upshot of it was that they

would all depart for the Bergamask town where Renzo had already made a start, and begin housekeeping together. As to the time, naught could be decided, since it depended on the plague and other circumstances besides. Once the danger was passed, Agnese was to return home to wait for Lucia, or Lucia would wait there for her. Meanwhile, Renzo was to make frequent excursions to Pasturo to see Lucia's mother and his, and to keep her informed of all that befell.

Before departing, he offered her money also. "I have it all here, d'ye see, that you know of. For I, too, had made a vow of my own: not to touch a penny of it till the matter was cleared up. So, if you have need of aught, bring here a basin of vinegar and water, and I'll throw in all fifty shiners."

"Nay, nay," objected Agnese. "I have more than enough left. Keep yours, and use it to put a roof over you."

Renzo returned to the village with the additional consolation of having found another loved one safe and well. He spent the remainder of the day and the following night in his friend's house. The next day he was again on the road, but in a different direction, that is, towards his adopted home.

He found Bortolo in good health, and in less fear of forfeiting it as things had, in these few days, taken a rapid turn for the better in that vicinity also. But few were taking the disease, and it was no longer what it had been. The deadly contusions and violent symptoms of its earlier stages had vanished. A slow fever, mostly intermittent, and a smill discolored bubo or so that healed like an ordinary boil, were the only inflictions it now entailed. The aspect of the village was transformed. The survivors began to go out, to count heads and to exchange condolences or congratulations. There was already talk of resuming industry. Employers were beginning to indenture new artisans, especially in those trades which had been short-handed before the plague, as in silk-spinning. Renzo promised his cousin without haggling (but subject to due approbation) to come back to work as soon as they established themselves in the village. He busied himself, meanwhile, with the most necessary preparations. He found a larger house, a matter now of

very little difficulty or expense, and stocked it with furniture and utensils, for which he had at last to tap his treasury, though only moderately, since everything was cheap, there being more goods than purchasers.

After some days he returned to his native village, which he found still more notably changed for the better. He skipped off again without delay to Pasturo, where he found Agnese entirely recovered in spirits and inclined to return home at the first possible moment. So that he himself acted as her escort. We pass over in silence their words and emotions on seeing together once again the familiar scenes.

Agnese found everything as she had left it. So that she could not but remark that, this time, the angels had kept guard, a widow and her child being in question. "And the other time," she suffixed, "when it looked as if the Lord had been elsewhere and not thinking of us, since He permitted our gear to be stolen, it was just the other way round; since He sent me the wherewithal to repair everything from another quarter entirely. No, not everything, either; because Lucia's fine new wedding-dress that those rapscallions carried off with them was still lacking. And lo! here it cometh to us now from a stranger. What would I have said, had some one told me when I was killing myself to get that other one ready? 'Ah! poor woman! thou thinkest to sew for Lucia. Alack! thou sewest thou knowest not for whom. Heaven alone knoweth what kind of a creature those silks and laces will adorn! While Lucia's own trousseau, the one she will really wear, will be provided by a good soul whose very existence is unknown to thee now.' "

Her first care, on returning, was to prepare the decentest lodging she could contrive in her poor cottage for that same good soul. She then went looking for silk to spin, and it was in spinning that she beguiled the intervening time. Renzo, on his part, did not pass these tedious days in idleness. He had command of two trades, fortunately, and he now reverted to farming. Part of the time he spent in helping his host, for whom it was great luck to have a workman at his beck in a time like the present, especially a workman of Renzo's ability; the rest of the

time he gave to cultivating, or rather, reclaiming Agnese's garden, which had been entirely neglected in her absence. As to his own farm, he never set a hand to it, saying that it was too tousled a wig to comb, and that it craved more than one pair of arms to bring it back. He did not even set foot in it, any more than in the house, since it would have sickened him to look at the desolation, and besides, he had already determined to get rid of everything at no matter what sacrifice, and to invest what little he received in his adopted country.

If the survivors in general were like people risen from the dead, Renzo was doubly so to his compatriots. Every one showered him with greetings and congratulations, and wanted to hear his story from his own lips. "And the ban on him?" the reader may ask. "How did he get over that?" Splendidly. He never paid the least heed to it, presuming that those who might have enforced it would ignore it as much as he did. Nor was he mistaken. And this was not a consequence solely of the plague, which had made matchwood of so many things. It was a common occurrence at the time, as might be deduced from different passages of this same history, that decrees affecting whole classes as well as individuals, if there was no private animosity to keep them alive and make them operative, fell into desuetude, even where they had not been dead letters from the start—not unlike musket-balls, which, if they do not take effect, simply lie on the ground and give no further worry. It is a necessary consequence of multiplying laws lightly. Man's activity has a limit, and when it runs to excess in commanding, it must work a deficit in executing. What goes into the hilt cannot go into the blade.

For those who would know how Renzo got along with Don Abbondio during this period of suspense, it may be stated that they both kept their distance; Don Abbondio for fear of hearing the marriage topic announced (at the thought of which Don Rodrigo started up before him with his bravos on one side, and on the other the cardinal with his arguments), Renzo, because he had determined to keep silent until the last moment, being loath to risk irritating him beforehand, raising Heaven knew

what fresh difficulties, and becoming embroiled with useless gossip. His gossiping he did with Agnese. "Think you she will come soon," one would ask. "I hope so," the other would reply. And often the one who had made the reply would, shortly after, ask the self-same question. By such ruses they managed to while away the time, which seemed to lag the more as it approached the end.

For the benefit of the reader we shall compress all that time into a single moment, simply stating that Lucia left the *lazaretto* in company with the widow a few days after Renzo's visit; that, a general quarantine being prescribed, they made it together in the latter's home; that part of the time was spent in preparing Lucia's trousseau, to which she consented, after proper remonstrances, to lend a hand; that, the quarantine being over, the widow left shop and house in charge of her brother, the commissary, and concluded arrangements for the trip. We might add: They set out; they arrived; and the whole sequel without more ado. But with all our willingness to defer to the reader's impatience, there are three facts incidental to this interval of time which we are loath to pass over in silence; and, as regards two of them at least, we believe the reader himself will agree that it would have been a mistake.

The first concerns the nun of Monza. When Lucia came to speak to the widow more particularly and coherently of her adventure than she had been able to do in the agitation of her first confidences, and made more specific references to the lady who had harbored her in the convent there, she learned things which, while they gave the key to many mysteries, filled her soul with painful and awesome astonishment. She learned that the unhappy wretch, having become suspected of atrocious crimes, had been transferred to a convent in Milan by order of the cardinal; that there, after resisting furiously for a while, she had come to her senses and confessed; and that her life at present was a self-imposed expiation so macerating that no one could have added to its rigors short of despatching her altogether. Those who would know more of her sad story will find it in

the work we have elsewhere quoted in speaking of the same character.[1]

The second incident is that Lucia, on inquiring after Father Cristoforo from every Capuchin she could meet in the *lazaretto,* heard with more of sorrow than surprise that he had died of the plague.

Finally, before leaving the city, she was anxious to know something of her former master and mistress and to pay her respects, in case either was alive. The widow accompanied her to the house, where they learned that both of them had joined the great majority. Of Donna Prassede, when we say that she was dead, we have said all that there is to say. But our anonymous author has thought fit to dilate somewhat more upon Don Ferrante, it being question of a savant; and, at our own risk, we shall transcribe what he sets down as he left it.

He states, therefore, that at the very first mention of the "plague," Don Ferrante was one of the stoutest impugners of the idea, and that he constantly maintained his opposition to the end,—not boisterously, like the common people, but with scholarly arguments, which one cannot tax at least with lack of dialectic.

"*In rerum natura,*" he used to say, "there are only two kinds of beings: substances and accidents. If I prove that the contagion can be neither of these things, I shall have proved that it doth not exist—that it is a chimera. This is how I proceed. Substances are either spiritual or material. That the contagion is a spiritual substance, is an absurdity that no one would maintain. Hence it is useless to discuss it. Material substances are either simple or compound. Now, the contagion is not a simple substance; and I prove it in four words. It is not aerial; for, if it were, instead of passing from one body to another, it would fly off at once to its proper sphere. It is not aqueous; else it would run, and the winds would dry it up. It is not igneous; for then it would burn. It is not terreous; because then it would be visible. Neither is it a compound substance; because in any case it would be sensible to the eye or to the touch. And who hath seen this contagion? or touched it? It remaineth to

[1] Ripamonti, Hist. Pat., Decade V, Book VI, Ch. III.

discover if it can be an accident. Worse and worse. These learned gentleman tell us that one body communicates it to another. That is their trump card. That is their pretext for issuing so many silly prescriptions. Now, supposing it to be an accident, it would be a transferable accident—two words utterly incongruous, because all philosophy showeth nothing to be clearer than this: that an accident cannot pass from one subject to another. But if, to avoid this Scylla, they are brought to allege that the accident is an effect, they fall into Charybdis. Because, if it be an effect, then, as a consequence, it cannot be communicated or propagated, as they prate about. These principles being settled, what skills it for them to come preaching to us about vibices, exanthemata, anthraces——?"

"All twaddle," some one once blurted out.

"Nay, nay," rejoined Don Ferrante; "I say not that. Science is science. Only one must know how to handle it. Vibices, exanthemata, anthraces, bubos, parotids, furuncles, are all respectable words having each its own precise meaning. But I say that it hath naught to do with the question. Who denieth that there can be such things? nay, that there are? It importeth only to know whence they come."

This was the beginning of Don Ferrante's troubles. As long as he only assailed the rumor of a plague, he found everywhere ready and willing ears; because it is astounding what prestige professional scholars enjoy as long as they attempt to prove to people what they already believe. But, when it came to distinguishing and trying to prove that the error of the physicians lay, not in affirming the existence of a widespread and terrible disease, but in assigning its proper cause, then (I speak of the first period, when men objected to the mention of plague)—then, instead of acquiescence, he found stubborn opposition and rebellion. It was all over with lengthy disquisitions; his doctrine could now be set forth only in driblets.

"That," he would say, "is the true cause; and even those who maintain their fanciful theories are fain to recognize it. Let them deny, if they can, the fatal conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter. And when did any one ever hear of a heavenly influence

being propagated? Or will their worships deny heavenly influences? Perhaps they will deny that there be stars? or say that they are stuck in the sky, like so many pins in a pin-cushion, with nothing to do? But what I can't understand at all is that these worshipful physicians confess that we are under so malignant a conjunction, and in the next breath tell us without a particle of shame: Do not touch this, do not touch that, and you will be safe. As if avoiding material contact with earthly objects could prevent the heavenly bodies from exercising their virtues! And such a pother about burning rags! Poor dolts! Would you burn Jupiter? Would you burn Saturn?"

His fretus—that is to say, upon these grounds—he omitted all precautions against the plague, took it, went to bed, and died, like a hero of Metastasio, inveighing against the stars.

And that famous library of his? Its scattered volumes are, perhaps, still collecting the inglorious dust of second-hand bookstalls.

Chapter XXXVIII

One evening Agnese heard a carriage stop at the door. " 'Tis she, certainly," she thought. It was she in truth, and the widow with her. How they greeted each other the reader may imagine for himself.

Early the next morning comes Renzo, knowing nothing of the arrival and intending only to canvass with Agnese this prolonged delay of Lucia. The things he did and the things he said at finding her confronting him are also left to the reader's imagination. Lucia's demonstrations, on the contrary, call for very little descriptive powers. "Give you greeting. And how are you?" she said, with downcast eyes and reserved manner. It must not be thought that Renzo considered this a cold reception or took it amiss. He took it just as it was meant; and, as among cultured people one knows how to discount compliments, so he understood perfectly well that these words did not express all that was in Lucia's heart. Besides, it was plain that she had two ways of pronouncing them—one for Renzo, and another for every one else.

"I am well now that I see thee," replied the youth in a well-worn phrase, which he was capable of coining at that moment.

"Our poor Father Cristoforo—" began Lucia. "Pray for his soul's repose; though we can be sure that he is praying for us now above."

"I expected it, but too surely," replied Renzo. Nor was this the only sad topic that was touched. But, so it was, whatever the subject, to him the conversation was delightful. Like one of those balky horses that stands stock-still in its course, lifting first one foot then another and marking time elaborately without ever budging from the spot, then all at once recovering its locomotion and flying off like the wind—such had time now become for him. At first the minutes seemed hours; now the hours passed like minutes.

The widow not only did not detract from the spirit of sociability, but even added to it. Certainly, when Renzo saw her on her pallet in the *lazaretto,* he could never have guessed what a jovial disposition she possessed. But the *lazaretto* and the country, death and nuptials, are hardly the same thing. Agnese and she were already fast friends. With Lucia it was a pleasure to see how affectionate she was, and at the same time how playful, teasing her with a kind of graceful raillery that never went too far—just sufficient to call forth the natural gaiety that lurked in her heart.

Renzo said, at length, that he was going to Don Abbondio's to arrange for the wedding. "Your reverence," he began, in a half-bantering, half-respectful manner, on arriving at the rectory, "hath that headache passed away that kept thee from marrying us before? Now there is plenty of time, the bride is here, and I am come to ask when it will be convenient. Only, this time, I hope there will be no delays."

Don Abbondio did not refuse outright, but he began to palter and make excuses. Why court notoriety and publish his name from the housetops, with that warrant hanging over him? and the thing could be done as well elsewhere; and so on, and so on.

"I see," rejoined Renzo; "thou art not altogether rid of that headache. But listen." And he proceeded to describe the plight in which he had seen Don Rodrigo, who by this time must be no more. "Let us hope," he concluded, "that the Lord will deal mercifully with him."

"That hath naught to do with the case," said Don Abbondio. "Have I said 'No,' forsooth? I do not refuse. I speak—I speak for good reasons. Besides, d'ye see, while there is life —Look at me. I'm a mere shadow of myself. I, too, had better than one foot in the grave; yet here I am, and—if so be turbulence doth not pursue me—there, enough—I can still look forward to a few years. And then, certain constitutions are tougher than others. But, as I say, that hath naught to do with it."

After some further interchanges, neither more nor less conclusive than this, Renzo made his finest bow, and returned to make a report to the women-folk. "I came away," he concluded,

"because, being near the end of my patience, I would not risk losing my temper and forgetting my duty. At times he was just like on that other occasion—the same arrogance, the same palaver. I am sure that, had it gone on much longer, he would have come at me again in Latin. It's to be another long-drawn-out affair, I see that. Better for us to do as he saith straightway, and go get married yonder."

"Do you know what we shall do?" put in the widow. "Let us women go and make another trial, and see if we can succeed better. Thus I, too, shall have the pleasure of knowing this man—whether he be as you say. But let it be after dinner, so as not to return to the attack too suddenly. Now, sir groom, take us two for a walk, while Agnese is getting the meal, and I'll play mamma to Lucia. I am eager to see more of these mountains and this lake, of which I have heard so much, and which, from the glimpse I have already had, seem a picture indeed."

Renzo brought them, first of all, to his friend's house, where there was another rejoicing. They made him promise to come and dine with them, not only that day, but every other day, if he could.

After the walk and the meal, Renzo started off without saying whither. The women remained deliberating for a while upon their plan of action, and at length sallied forth to the assault.

"Here they are," said Don Abbondio to himself. But he put a good face on it, congratulated Lucia, gave greeting to Agnese, and paid his compliments to the stranger. He made them sit down and at once started talking of the plague. He wished to hear from Lucia how she had fared through the calamity. The *lazaretto* gave her companion an opportunity to take part in the conversation. Then, as was proper, Don Abbondio told how he himself had weathered the storm. Then Agnese was congratulated on having gone scot-free. So it wore on. The two matrons had been on the alert from the first moment for a chance to broach the main question, and I know not which of them finally broke the ice. But bless your heart! Don Abbondio was deaf on that side. He did not say "No"; not at all. But

he was at his old trick of twisting and turning and beating about the bush. " 'Twere need," he would say, "that the ban be lifted first. Thou," he said to the widow, "who art from Milan, must know the ways of things there. Thou canst command some strong influence—some noble of weight. With such resources no wound but can be healed. Or, if they would cut the knot at one stroke and not invite all these delays—thou knowest that these youngsters, and Agnese here too, will be for exiling themselves—I know not if it be for weal or woe; one's country is where one is best off—why the whole business could be despatched there, where the ban doth not hold. I'll never be easy till I know that they are wed, but in the right way, peaceably. I'll tell you the truth, to come out flatly from the altar here with that name of Lorenzo Tramaglino, and that warrant still hanging over him—I could not do it with an easy mind. I like him too well. I would fear to do him an evil service. See for yourself if I be not right. See now, Agnese—Lucia."

Here Agnese and the widow began to refute such arguments and Don Abbondio to press them under another form, without either side advancing an inch, when Renzo came in, with unhesitating step and an expression that promised news. "His Lordship, the Marquis ———, hath arrived," he announced.

"What's this? Arrived? Where?" asked Don Abbondio, rising to his feet.

"Arrived at his palace, which was Don Rodrigo's, this marquis having been declared his heir by *fidecommissio,* as they say. So that's an end of all doubts. As for me, I would fain be assured he died a good death. Now I can change the *Pater Noster's* I've been saying for *De Profundis'*. And this marquis is a grand man."

"To be sure," said Don Abbondio, "I have heard him so bespoken more than once—a grand man, indeed, one of the old school. If it were really true——?"

"Would your reverence believe the sacristan?"

"Why so?"

"Because he hath seen him with his own eyes. I was only in the outskirts; and, in truth, I went there, thinking it was the

place to find out something. And so I did, from more than one. Then I met Ambrogio coming down from the castle, where he had seen him acting as owner. Would you hear Ambrogio? I bade him wait without, on purpose."

"Let us hear him," assented Don Abbondio. Renzo called the sacristan, who corroborated all that he had said, and added other circumstances still. Having settled their doubts, he went his way.

"Ah! so he is dead! dead in real earnest!" exclaimed Don Abbondio. "See, now, my children, whether such people can defy Providence. A great boon, a great relief, for this poor village, since ye know there was no living with him. This plague hath been a great scourge, 'tis true, but a great besom, too. It hath swept away certain gentry, my children, that we could never have hoped to see put out of our way—in their very prime, in the pride of their strength, the darlings of fortune. One would have thought the man who was to bless their grave was just learning his Latin verbs in the seminary. And in the twinkling of an eye they are whisked away hundreds at a time. We've seen the last of this going about with their pack of ruffians at heel, with their noses in the air, and their backs stiff as a poker, and their lofty way of looking down on you as though every one in the world was their tenant at will. Whereas now he is gone, and we are still here. He hath given us all a deal of trouble, d'ye see; we can say so much at last."

"I have pardoned him all," said Renzo.

"And thou dost well," replied Don Abbondio; "but we can also be thankful to Heaven for the good riddance. Now, coming back to yourselves, I repeat: Suit yourselves. If you wish me to marry you, I am at your service; if you wish to go elsewhere, suit your pleasure. As for the ban, I see for myself that, with none to wish thee harm, it need no longer give us pause; and the less so on account of the decree of amnesty that hath since been issued to signalize the birth of his serene highness. And also the plague! The plague! It hath cancelled many a score! So, if you wish,—today is Thursday,—I can call you out on Sunday, because the other promulgation no longer counts

after all this time. And then I'll have the consolation of marrying you myself."

"Your reverence knoweth 'tis for that we came."

"Very good. I am at your service. And I wish to let his eminence know at once."

"Who is 'his eminence'?" demanded Agnese.

"His eminence is our cardinal archbishop, whom may God preserve."

"Oh! there you must excuse me," rejoined Agnese; "because, little and all as I know, I assure your reverence that is not the way to call him. For, when we were to see him the second time, and speaking to him just as I am speaking to your reverence now, one of those priests who are of the quality drew me aside and instructed me how to behave, and to say 'your illustrious lordship' and 'my lord.'"

"Yes, and were he to come back now and instruct thee again, he would tell thee to say 'your eminence,' d'ye see? since the pope—whom may God also preserve—hath prescribed, beginning last June, that this title be given to all cardinals. And know ye why? Because this same 'illustrious lordship' that had been reserved for them and sundry other princes, ye can see for yourselves how many have come to be called by it and how willingly they put up with the addition. And what was the pope to do? Take it away from all? That would mean complaining, protesting, bad feeling, trouble; and in the end things would be as before. So he hath found a fine expedient. And now they'll begin to call 'your eminence' to bishops, then, little by little, to abbots, to provosts,—'tis human nature: they would all fain rise, rise, rise,—then to canons——"

"Then to pastors," put in the widow.

"Nay, nay," rejoined Don Abbondio, "pastors are the cart-horses, never fear; no airs for them, only 'your reverence' to the end of the world. But 'twould not surprise me if these lordlings, who have been hearing themselves called 'illustrious' and to being treated like cardinals, should some day want 'your eminence.' And if they do, d'ye see, there'll not be lacking such as will bestow it on them. And then the pope, whoever he may

be, must find something else for cardinals. Well, well; let us come back to ourselves. Sunday I shall call you out in church; and, meanwhile, d'ye know what I have bethought to serve you still better? I shall seek a dispensation from the other two bans. They must have a fine to-do down there in the *curia* giving dispensations, if every place is like this. Next Sunday I have already one—two—three without counting yourselves, and others may come in. And as time goeth on, ye will see what will happen: not a bachelor left. Perpetua made a downright blunder to die now; even she could have found a bidder at present. And at Milan, madam, things are much the same, I imagine."

"Just so. Fancy, fifty couples called out in my own parish last Sunday.

"Said I not so? The world will not die out for a while yet. And thou, madam, hath no one been setting his cap at thee?"

"Nay, nay; that's for others. I abhor the thought of it."

"Yes, yes; thou wouldst be the odd one. Even Agnese, see you now, even Agnese here——"

"Bah! your reverence hath a joking mood, too," retorted Agnese.

"To be sure, I have, and methinks it is in season at last. We've had our own share of troubles, my children, a very fair share; and the few days that remain to us, let us hope, will be somewhat quieter. Well for you that have a breathing-space, barring further evils, to talk over your past troubles at leisure. But I have heard the eleventh hour sound, and three quarters of the twelfth, and—Rogues may die and the plague be cured, but there is no cure for old age. 'Tis as they say: *senectus ipsa est morbus.*"

"Now," put in Renzo, "your reverence may speak Latin to your heart's content, and I'll not say 'Nay.'"

"Still harping on the Latin, art thou? Very well. I'll pay thee in that coin. When thou comest before me with somebody at thy side to be asked certain questions in Latin, I'il say: 'Latin is not to thy taste; go in peace.' How like you that?"

"Oh, I conceive you," rejoined Renzo; "but that is not the Latin that scareth me. That's honest Latin, holy Latin, like

that of the mass, which even the cloth must read. I speak of the rascally Latin that taketh one unawares, outside of church, in the midst of a conversation. For instance—now that all is over with and we are here together—the Latin your reverence would be spouting right there in the corner to prove to me that you could not possibly, that there were other formalities, and what not. Translate it for us now, I prithee, into the vernacular."

"Hold your tongue, you clown; hold your tongue. Let those matters rest, for, if we were to stir them up and balance our books, I know not who would come out ahead. As for thee, I was not surprised, blackguard as thou art. But this demure body here, this piece of sanctitude, this wax Madonna, whom 'twould appear a sin even to suspect! But there, I know who drilled her, I know well." So saying, he trained on Agnese the finger he had been pointing at Lucia; and it is indescribable with what good humor and playfulness he made these allusions. The news had banished the constraint and reticence that had shackled him so long; and we should still be a long way off from the end of our story, were we to detail the rest of their talk, which he was the one to protract, holding them back more than once when they would be off, and stopping them again on the doorstep, always to exchange the merest trivialities.

The next day he received a visit that was the more acceptable for being so unexpected—from the marquis of whom they had just been speaking. He was a man past middle age, and his countenance was a sort of voucher for all that fame had been saying in regard to him. It was open, courteous, mild, humble, dignified, and bore an expression of something like sad resignation.

"I am come," he said, "to bring thee the greetings of the cardinal archbishop."

"Oh, what condescension for both him and thee!"

"As I was taking my leave of that incomparable man, who doth me the honor of being my friend, he spoke to me of a young pair from this parish who had been betrothed but who suffered some injustice at the hands of my predecessor, poor Don Rodrigo.

His eminence desireth to have news of them. Are they still alive? And have their difficulties been adjusted?"

"All adjusted. In fact, I had proposed writing to his eminence. But now that I have the honor——"

"Are they here?"

"They are here, and as soon as it can be managed they will be husband and wife."

"I pray thee, tell me if I can be of any service to them, and advise me how it can be done most fittingly. In the late calamity I lost my two sons and their mother and received three considerable legacies. For my needs I had more than enough before. So to afford me an opportunity of laying out some of my surplus, especially an opportunity like this, is, thou seest, doing me a favor."

"Heaven bless thee! Because all are not like your lordship —Enough. I thank thee from my heart in the name of these children of mine. And since your lordship encourageth me, yes, I have an expedient to suggest that will not, perhaps, displease your lordship. Know, then, that these folk are determined to set up housekeeping elsewhere and to sell the little they possess hereabout—a small vineyard of nine or ten acres (more or less) of the youth's, but run entirely wild—worth only the ground itself—and two cottages, one his and the other the bride's, which are little better than rat-pits. The likes of your lordship can not be aware of the robbery to which the poor are subjected when they wish to sell. It always endeth the same. It is gobbled up by some curmudgeon, who hath probably had his eye on their three or four roods for some time, but, once he knoweth the other must sell out, draweth back and feigneth lack of interest. The owner must then run after him and give away his freehold for a crust of bread, especially under such circumstances as these. The most seasonable charity your illustrious lordship could confer upon the twain would be to rescue them from their present embarrassment by purchasing their trifle of property. To say sooth, the suggestion is not altogether disinterested on my part, since it would bring my parish such a

landlord as your lordship. But your lordship will decide for himself; I have only obeyed your behest in so speaking."

The marquis praised the suggestion, thanked Don Abbondio and begged him to fix the purchase price and to make it very high. Then he petrified him by proposing that they go together to the house of the bride, where they would be apt to find the groom also.

On the way Don Abbondio, all in an ecstasy, as may be imagined, thought of something else. "Since your lordship is so bent on doing good to these folk," he said, there is another service that could be done them. The youth is under a warrant —a sort of ban—for some harmless prank he committed in Milan two years ago on the day of the riot, in which the unsuspecting lad became innocently involved, like a mouse in a trap. Nothing serious, d'ye see—a boyish trick—a lark. He is not capable of anything worse, as I can avouch that have baptized him and seen him grow up. Besides, if 'twould divert your lordship to hear these simple people jabber about it in their own way, you could have them relate the story to you; and you will hear for yourself. Now, the matter being old, no one payeth any further heed to it, and, as I say, the youth is planning to leave the country. But later on he might take it into his head to return, or something else might turn up—we never can tell—and your lordship knoweth better than I that 'twere safer to have his name razed from their books beyond. Your lordship's rank and merits carry weight in Milan—No, permit me, I beseech you; the truth must be told in its own place. One word of recommendation from the likes of your lordship would more than suffice to acquit him for good."

"There is no graver charge against the youth?"

"No, no; I could not believe it. They made a great hue-and-cry of it at the time; but now I believe it would be a mere matter of form."

"The case being so, 'tis easy, and I willingly assume the task."

"And then not to wish me to call thee a great man. Thou art, and I will call thee so; in spite of thee I will say it. And

if I held my peace, 'twould not avail, because it is the common cry; and *vox populi, vox Dei.*"

They found the three women, and Renzo with them, according to calculations. How they were affected, I leave my readers to imagine; but it is my own belief that these rude walls, and the very stools and pots and pans wondered at such an extraordinary visitor. He took the conversation in hand, speaking of the cardinal and other subjects with frank cordiality and at the same time with delicate circumspectness. He then proceeded to make the proposition that had brought him thither. Don Abbondio, being invited to make the terms, entered the conversation; and after some hesitation and apologies—that it was out of his line —that he would have to go at it blindly—that he spoke out of obedience only—that it remained at the other's option—he at last mentioned a figure which he thought exorbitant. The purchaser said that, for his part, he was perfectly satisfied, and, as if he had misunderstood, doubled the sum. Nor would he listen to corrections. He cut short the discussion by inviting those present to dine at his palace the day after the wedding, where the deed would be executed in form.

"Ah!" murmured Don Abbondio to himself after reaching home; "if the plague brought such things about everywhere, 'twere a shame to speak ill of it. There were almost need of one every generation. One might even sign articles to catch it —but so as to survive, now, to be sure."

The dispensation came, the ban was lifted, the blessed day at last dawned. The bride and groom marched in triumphant security to Don Abbondio's own church, where they were made one by Don Abbondio's own words. Another triumph, and one more singular still, was the trip to the marquis' castle; and I again leave the reader to imagine the thoughts which flashed through their minds in climbing that ascent and passing under those portals, and the remarks each made according to his own turn of mind. I shall only note that, in the midst of the rejoicing, now one, now another would suggest that only Father Cristoforo was needed to crown the festivity. "But," they would subjoin, "he's better off than we."

The marquis gave them a great welcome and conducted them to a pleasant refectory, where he saw the bridal couple seated, together with Agnese and the widow. Before retiring to dine elsewhere with Don Abbondio, he delayed to mingle a while with his guests and even to wait on them personally. I hope that no one will be tempted to object that it would have been simpler for him to have made one party with them. I have described him as an excellent man, but not as an eccentric. I have said that he was humble, not that he was a prodigy of humility. He had just so much of it as to take a lower place than these worthy peasants, but not enough to associate with them as an equal.

After the twofold banquet the deed was drawn up by a lawyer, who did not happen to be Doctor Azzecca-Garbugli. He, or his corpse, at any rate, was at that moment, and is still, at Canterelli. And, for such of my readers as may not come from those parts, even I can perceive the need of an explanation.

Perhaps a half-mile beyond Lecco and almost at the edge of another village called Castello there is a crossways called Canterelli. Off to one side of the intersection the ground swells into a bank, or artificial mound, surmounted by a cross, which is in reality a great heap of corpses accumulated during the plague. To be exact, tradition merely says that they died of *a* plague; but it must indubitably have been this, which was the last and most fatal of which history preserves the remembrance. And besides, we know that tradition always says too little, unless we help it with our own invention.

The only difficulty that occurred on the way home was the inconvenient weight of the coin which Renzo carried off with him. But our hero, as you know, had borne worse fatigues in his time. I say nothing of his fresh mental labors, though they were not by any means light, devising the best way of investing his new capital. What with the projects which flashed across his mind and the reflections and day-dreams they evoked, the deliberations *pro* and *con* now as to farming and now as to silk-spinning, it was as if two learned academies of the past century had met in debate. Only, for him the quandary was more real; because, being only one person, he could not say: What need to

choose? Both are good in their way. The two methods are substantially one, and their twoness is only that of a pair of legs, which go better together than alone.

The sole subject of concern now was packing up and leaving, the Tramaglinos for their new home and the widow for Milan. There was no end of tear-shedding, revoicing their mutual thanks and promising to look each other up. And, barring only the tears, Renzo's parting with his hospitable friend was no less tender. Nor should you think it was a cold leave-taking with Don Abbondio. These poor souls had always felt a respectful attachment to their pastor, and he, at bottom, felt kindly for them. It is these plagued business affairs that play hob with one's affections.

Should you ask whether there was not also some sorrow in tearing themselves away from their native place, their dear mountains—to be sure, there was, as there is some sorrow mixed up with almost everything. But it must needs have been mild, since they could have avoided it by staying at home, now that Don Rodrigo was dead and the ban lifted. But they had for some time now grown accustomed to regard Bergamo as their own country. Renzo had reconciled the women-folk to it by reciting the easy circumstances to which laborers there attained and a hundred details of the fine life to be led. Besides, they had passed some unpleasant moments in that which they were leaving behind, and sad memories generally end by turning us against the places which recall them. And, if it is our birth-place, the associations are only the more poignant and bitter. Even the babe in arms, our anonymous author remarks, reposes gratefully on its nurse's breast and confidingly seeks the paps that have ministered gently to its hunger heretofore; but let the nurse apply wormwood to wean the child, and it breaks off, not all at once, but finally.

What will you say now, if I tell you that they were hardly settled in their new home when Renzo found matters of fresh annoyance already confronting him? They were trifles, if you will; but then, it takes so little to mar such unclouded happiness as his! In few, the occasion was as follows.

The talk that had gone on in the village long before Lucia arrived, the knowledge that Renzo had passed through so much on her account without ever wavering in his constancy, and, possibly, a good word spoken by some friend who was partial to him and his concerns, had created a certain curiosity about Lucia and some anticipation concerning her beauty. Now, the reader knows how it always is with anticipation—fanciful, credulous, cock-sure; and in the event, fastidious and captious —never finding anything to satisfy it, because it knew not really what it wanted, and disparaging without remorse the good it had credited without warrant. When, now, this Lucia appeared before them, many of those who had expected to find her hair of real gold, her cheeks literally like roses and eyes outshining each other in brilliancy, and the Lord knows what besides, began to shrug their shoulders, turn up their noses and say: "Umph! Is this she? After all the delay and all the talking, we expected more. What is she, after all? A peasant lass like another. Umph! Her equals and betters can be found anywhere." On coming down to details, one discovered this defect, another that, and some even found her downright ugly.

As none of them said such things point-blank to Renzo, there was no great harm so far. Those who did the harm were those who carried it to Renzo. Foolishly, if you will, Renzo took the matter much to heart. He began to brood and complain. With certain ones he rehearsed his grievances, but particularly to himself. "What concern is it of yours?" he would ask his imaginary audience. "Who told you to expect much or little? Did I ever try to get your ear, or tell you that she was handsome? And when you came telling it to me, did I ever make you any other answer than that she was a good lass? A peasant, eh? Did I say I would bring a princess back to you? She pleaseth you not? Look elsewhere, then. You have beauties of your own; look at them."

And mark how, at times, a trifle determines a man's state for a whole lifetime. If Renzo had had to live always in that village, as he had planned to do, he would have been far from happy. From constant irritation he had become at last irritat-

ing. He was brusque with every one, because every one might be a critic of Lucia. Not that he ignored all rules of etiquette; but you know, gentle reader, what fine opportunities we have of wreaking our spite without violating the proprieties—even to ripping one another up with our swords. There was something indefinably cynical in every word he spoke. He, too, found matter of cavil in everything. If the weather was bad two days in succession, "Well," he would say, "what more can be expected of such a place?" There were not a few, between ourselves, even of such as liked him at first, who were turned against him; and so, from one thing to another, he would have found himself in time at war with the whole population without being able to define the origin of all the trouble.

But it might be said that the plague had obligated itself to remedy all his mistakes. Now it had carried off the owner of another silk-mill situated almost at the gates of Bergamo; and the heir, a young ne'er-do-well, who found not one thing in the whole building to furnish him diversion, was resolved, nay, eager to sell even at half price. But he wanted cash down, that he might turn his inheritance to other purposes than producing. Bortolo, having heard of the matter, hastened to investigate. Negotiations were opened. Better terms could not be dreamed; but that one condition spoiled it all, since, with all his hoarding and economizing, he was still a long way off from commanding so much ready money. He left the negotiations pending and posted back to lay the case before Renzo and propose that they purchase the property in partnership. So fine a proposal ended all of Renzo's economic deliberations; he decided then and there for silk-spinning. They started off together, and the bargain was closed. When the new owners came to establish themselves, later on, in their property, Lucia, who had, this time, been preceded by no expectations, not only was not found fault with, but she even found favor, and Renzo in time came to hear that more than one had remarked of her: "Hast seen the handsome *goose* that is come among us?" The epithet made the substantive pass muster.

And even his unpleasant experiences in the other village left

an aftermath of useful instruction. Before that he had been somewhat glib in expressing his own opinions, and unrestrained in criticising other men's wives as well as everything else. Now he discovered that words have one savor on the tongue but quite a different one in the ear, and he got somewhat into the habit of listening internally to the sound of his own before uttering them.

My readers must not think, however, that he had no more annoyances. Man (says our anonymous author, whose strange taste for similes you already know, gentle reader, to your cost. But suffer this one also, as it will be the last)—man, as long as he is alive, is like an invalid who feels the discomfort of his own particular bed and sees others about that seem outwardly to be better made, smooth, level; and he calculates that he would be more at ease on them. But, if he succeeds in changing, he is hardly lying down again when he begins to discover, with the pressure of his weight, here a lump and there a splinter; and so he is just where he started off. And therefore, adds our author, one should aim rather at doing well than at faring well, and we shall end by faring better also. The figure is somewhat labored, 'tis true, and just in the seventeenth century style; but true at bottom. For the rest, he continues, there were no more difficulties and troubles on the same scale as those we have related, and our humble characters from that time forth led one of the most peaceful and happy and enviable of lives; so that, if I were to describe it, I should bore you to death.

Business went like a charm. There was a little dulness at first, owing to the scarcity of workmen and the dispersal of those who survived and their exorbitant demands. Edicts were promulgated limiting their wages, but things picked up in spite of such a remedy, because eventually they must needs pick up. Then another edict arrived from Venice, and a more reasonable one, providing exemption for ten years from all real and personal taxes for foreigners taking up residence in the state. This proved to be a windfall for our friends.

Before the year was out a fine baby was born to them, and, as if to afford Renzo an opportunity to fulfil his magnanimous

promise, it was a girl, and you may rest assured that it was called Mary. In time this one was followed by I know not how many more of either sex, and Agnese was busy carrying them about one after the other, calling them young rogues the while and printing little white kisses all over their cheeks. They were all well inclined, and Renzo was determined they should all learn to read and write, saying that, since such knavishness existed, they should at least have some benefit of it.

It was a rare treat to hear him relate his adventures. He always ended them by enumerating the lessons they had taught him for his future conduct. "I learned," he would say, "not to stick my nose into street riots. I learned not to be a demagogue out of doors nor a toss-pot within. I learned not to keep my hand on door-knockers when there are excitable people about, nor to fasten bells to my feet before calculating the consequences." These, and a hundred others in a similar strain.

Lucia, however, while not finding his philosophy false in itself, was not satisfied with it. She felt vaguely that there was something needed to complete it. By dint of listening to the same refrain and meditating on it each time, "And I," she was one day moved to ask her moralist, "what should I have learned in that case? I went not seeking trouble; it came in quest of me. Unless thou wouldst allege," she would add, with a sweet smile, "that it was waywardness to like thee and pledge thee my troth."

Renzo at first was posed. After debating the question and seeking its solution a long time together, they at last concluded that trouble often comes, it is true, to such as bring it on themselves, but that the utmost innocence and caution serve not to ward it off; but that, when it does come, through our fault or without it, confidence in God lightens it and turns it to our own improvement. This conclusion, though arrived at by such plain people, has seemed so true that we have decided to set it down here as the moral of our whole story.

For the which, gentle reader, if it has not displeased you entirely, feel thankful to the scribe who wrote it, and a little also to the one who has revised it. But if, on the contrary, we have succeeded only in boring you, be assured that we have not done so on purpose.